FOOTHILLS TIMBER SALE PROJECT
FINAL ENIVRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

MARCH 2006

Introduction:

This document presents changes and additions made to the Foothills Timber Sale Project DEIS. In accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 36.2.530, DNRC has decided to adopt the DEIS as the FEIS, with all corrections, responses to comments, and additional information found in the Foothills Timber Sale Project errata. All issues raised by the public were either addressed in the DEIS, the responses to comments, or in the FEIS errata; thus, DNRC felt that it was unnecessary to reproduce a full FEIS. This document in combination with the DEIS and FEIS Summary constitute the Foothills Timber Sale Project Final Environmental Impact Statement.

This document consists of three sections:

A. Additions and errata to the DEIS, including the location in the DEIS where the additions or corrections occur……Page 2

B. DNRC's Proposed Decision……Page 7

C. The text of comments received, with DNRC responses in a parallel column……..Page 10

A. Additions and Errata to the SEIS

The following pages contain the additions and errata items pertaining to the DEIS. The location in the DEIS where additions or errata occur is identified in the left-hand column. The actual addition or errata is presented in the right-hand column. Except in the case where an entire page or section is added/changed, the additions are printed in **bold** and the errata are printed in ***bold italics.***

DEIS Page#/ LOCATION	**ADDITIONS/ERRATA**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
PAGE 1	3rd paragraph, last sentence: "Approximately ***850*** acres or less would initiate new forest stands using natural seeding or hand planting of conifer seedlings."
CHAPTER 2	
PAGE 18	Addition of Fisheries Mitigation for Krause, Birch, and Wolf Creeks and the Swan River: **Extend no-cut buffer to the width of the SMZ (a minimum of 50 feet). Retain at least 50% of trees greater than 8 inches from 50 feet out to edge of riparian management zone (dependent on site potential tree height).**
PAGE 21	Addition of two maps, Figures 2-3 and 2-4 (on pages 5-6 of this errata).
PAGE 28	2nd column, 2nd paragraph: B – The planned transportation plan would reduce open road density from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile.
PAGE 29	2nd column, 5th paragraph: This alternative would reduce open road density from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile.
CHAPTER 3	
PAGE 66	Last paragraph: Currently, ***2.2*** miles/sq. mile open road density (including highways and county roads) occurs on parcels included in the project area. However, disturbance attributable to motorized uses in the area may be much greater due to the rampant illegal motorized use of restricted roads. However, the level (number of trips per day average) of illegal road use by road system is unknown. If illegal use exceeds administrative use standards (ARM 36.11.403(53), then the linear open road density may approach approximately ***5.6*** miles/sq. mile.

PAGE 74

4th paragraph, 1st sentence: In 2002, the USFS purchased an Easement ($3900) for two non-motorized trails originating from the ***Jewel Basin Road*** and contouring across the east half of Section 2 to the Jewel Basin Hiking Area.

CHAPTER 4

PAGE 94

4th paragraph, 3rd sentence: (1) creating a no-cut buffer from the nearest bankfull edge of the stream channel out to a ***minimum of 50*** feet and (2) harvesting a maximum of 50 percent of trees greater than 8 inches in diameter at breast height from ***50*** feet out to 101 feet

5th paragraph, 3rd sentence: creating a no-cut buffer from the nearest bankfull edge of the stream channel out to a ***minimum of 50*** feet and (2) harvesting a maximum of 50 percent of trees greater than 8 inches in diameter at breast height from ***50*** feet out to 91 feet (measured site potential tree height).

PAGE 100

3rd paragraph, 1st sentence: Along the major creeks (Krause, Birch, and Wolf Creeks) that run through proposed harvest units, full retention of existing trees would occur from the bankfull edge out to ***50*** feet. In addition to the ***50*** foot no harvest buffer, ***40*** foot (Krause Creek), ***41*** foot (Wolf Creek), and ***51*** foot (Birch Creek) buffers would be established.

PAGE 106

1st paragraph: Under this alternative, hiding cover would be reduced in all regeneration units (843 acres) of the 4,887-acre project area (17.3%) and open road densities would be reduced from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile.

5th paragraph: Under this alternative, hiding cover would be reduced in all regeneration units (***531*** acres) of the 4,887-acre project area (10.9%) and open road densities would be reduced from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile.

PAGE 107	1st paragraph: Illegal motorized use would continue on the existing roads (approximately ***5.6*** miles/sq. mile) and pioneering of new roads would likely continue. 3rd paragraph: Open road densities would be reduced from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq (simple linear density).
PAGE 108	2nd paragraph: This alternative is expected to reduce motorized access by 14% by reducing simple linear open road densities from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile.
PAGE 109	1st paragraph: Open road densities would be reduced from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq (simple linear density).
PAGE 110	7th paragraph: Additionally, open road densities of ***2.2*** miles/sq. mile would persist.
PAGE 111	4th paragraph: This alternative would reduce open road densities from ***2.2 to 1.2*** miles/sq. mile,
PAGE 114	5th paragraph, 1st sentence: delete ***'or includes'*** and insert the following sentence: **Harvest activities will not cross or impact the trail. Logging would be visible from the trial for approximately 1200 feet.**

Figure 2 – 3.

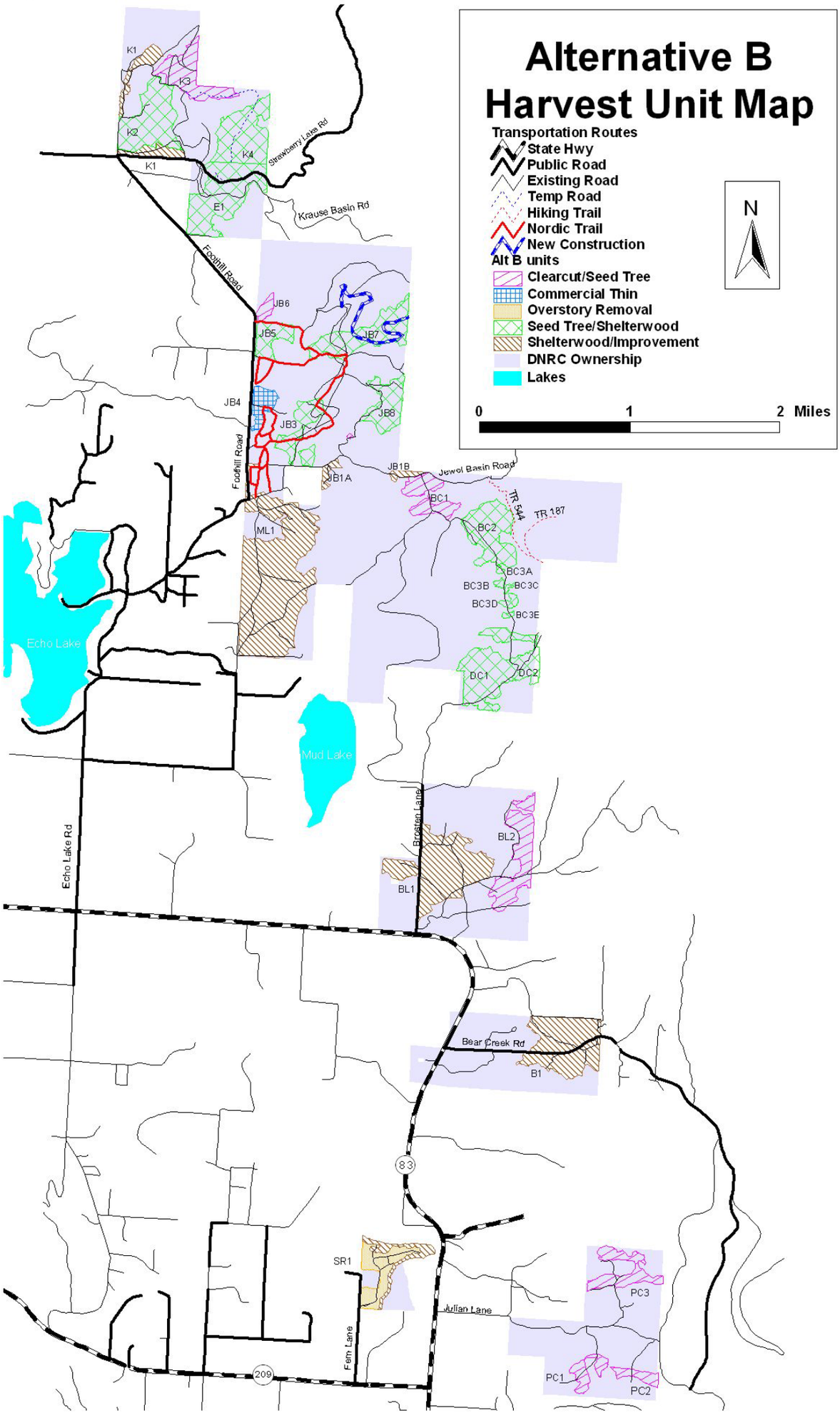
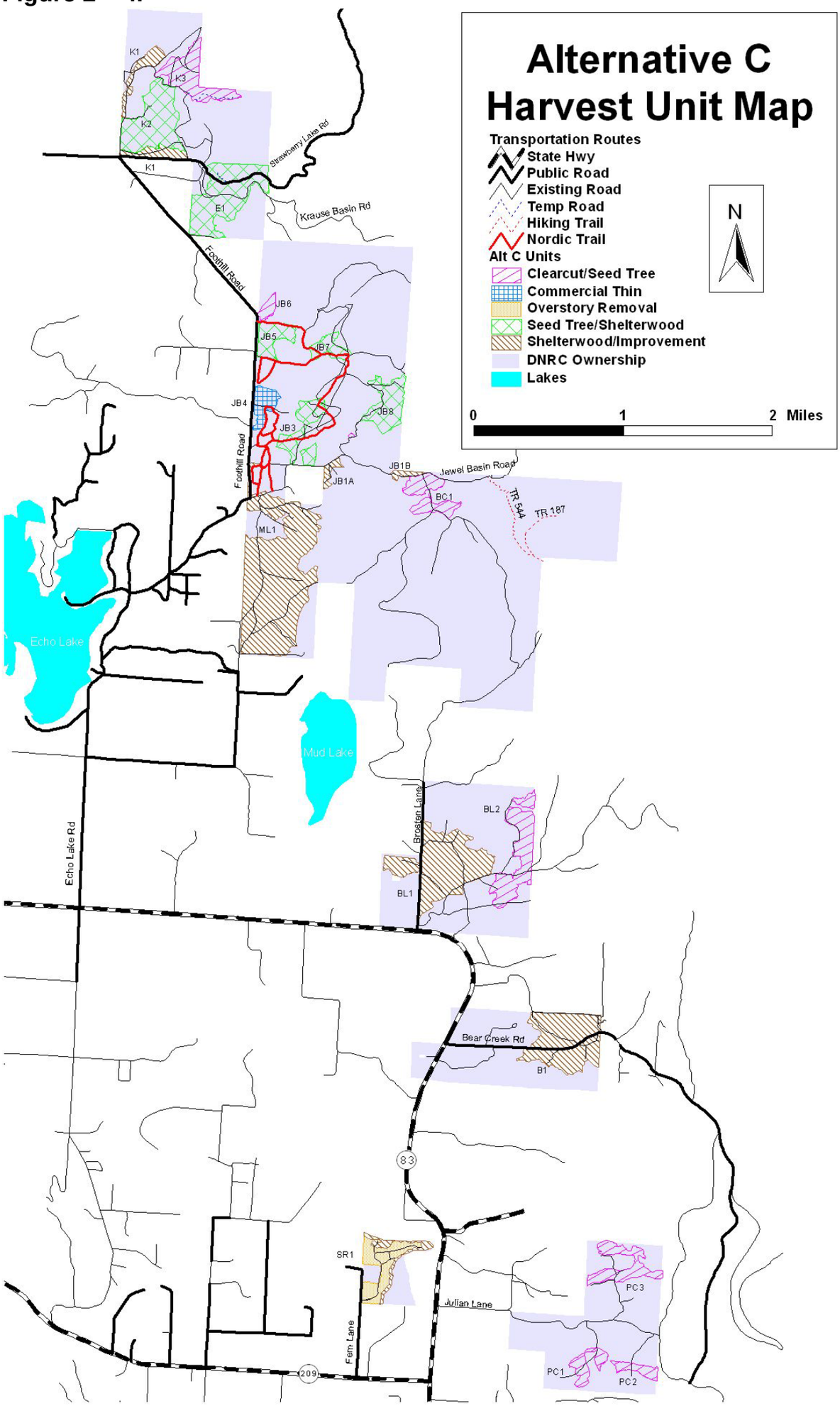

Alternative B
Harvest Unit Map
Transportation Routes
State Hwy
Public Road
Existing Road
Temp Road
Hiking Trail
Nordic Trail
New Construction
Alt B units
Clearcut/Seed Tree
Commercial Thin
Overstory Removal
Seed Tree/Shelterwood
Shelterwood/Improvement
DNRC Ownership
Lakes
N
0
1
2 Miles
K1
K3
K2
K4
E1
Strawberry Lake Rd
Krause Basin Rd
Foothill Road
JB6
JB5
JB7
JB4
JB3
JB8
JB1A
JB1B
Jewel Basin Road
BC1
TR 544
TR 187
BC2
BC3A
BC3B
BC3C
BC3D
BC3E
DC1
DC2
ML1
Echo Lake
Mud Lake
Echo Lake Rd
Brostian Lane
BL2
BL1
Bear Creek Rd
B1
83
SR1
Julian Lane
Fern Lane
209
PC3
PC1
PC2

Figure 2 – 4.


Alternative C
Harvest Unit Map
Transportation Routes
State Hwy
Public Road
Existing Road
Temp Road
Hiking Trail
Nordic Trail
Alt C Units
Clearcut/Seed Tree
Commercial Thin
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Lakes
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K1
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K2
K1
E1
Strawberry Lake Rd
Krause Basin Rd
Foothill Road
JB6
JB5
JB7
JB4
JB8
JB3
Foothill Road
JB1B
JB1A
Jewel Basin Road
BC1
TR 544
TR 187
ML1
Echo Lake
Mud Lake
Echo Lake Rd
Broslen Lane
BL2
BL1
Bear Creek Rd
B1
83
SR1
Julian Lane
Fern Lane
PC3
PC1
PC2
209

B. PROPOSED DECISION

This section describes the proposed decision by Greg Poncin, Kalispell Unit Manager, Northwestern Land Office. The scope of this proposed decision is limited to actions associated with the Foothills Timber Sale project. The proposed decision is specific to this project and is neither programmatic nor a general management plan for the Kalispell Unit.

Selection of Alternative B along with mitigations common to both alternatives has been identified as the proposed decision. Substantial consideration has been given to project objectives, the difference in effects between alternatives, and comments received on the Draft EIS. The advantages of Alternative B over Alternative C are based primarily on Alternative B best meeting the project objectives. Differences in impacts to resources between harvest alternatives are relatively small.

Alternatives Considered

Three alternatives were developed and are discussed in detail in the FEIS. They are summarized as follows:

No Action Alternative A

Timber harvesting as proposed would not occur. Firewood cutting and gathering would continue on an annual basis. Intermittently, small quantities of wood products would continue to be sold and removed from small areas. Salvage logging and removal of hazard trees within easements or residential leases would continue.

Temporary roads would not be built and restricted roads would not be reconstructed at this time. Maintenance mostly in the form of re-establishing road closures or installation of additional road closures would continue, as funding and priorities allow. The Birch Creek stream crossing would not be rehabilitated at this time.

Recreational uses of the area, both general and special would continue to include hiking, biking, ATV riding, shooting, hunting, horseback riding, Nordic skiing, and snowmobiling. Efforts to curtail vandalism or resource damage associated with unauthorized recreational use would continue as funding and priorities allow.

Components Common to Action Alternatives B & C

Both action alternatives are designed to improve timber stand productivity within the Foothills analysis area, as a necessary means for providing revenue generating opportunities in the future, while limiting present logging and road development costs. Timber harvesting focuses on mostly decadent stands dominated by grand fir that historically contained a larger component of western white pine, western larch, ponderosa pine, and/or Douglas-fir. Both alternatives strive to move timber stands toward a more healthy and vigorous condition while maintaining or promoting the establishment of desired forest species.

Action Alternative B

Action Alternative B would apply silvicultural treatments to 1,468 acres, harvesting approximately 9 MMBF of timber. This alternative would treat the greatest amount of acres and require more extensive road use and construction. To access harvest units and improve transportation systems, 44.5 miles of road would be used. Approximately 35.1 miles requires maintenance or reconstruction. New construction of permanent road would be limited to 1.1 mile; approximately 1.8 miles of new temporary road construction would be required; 15.8 miles would be reconstructed prior to use, and 18.2 miles would be closed after use. Road closures or abandonment would reduce open road status in the project area by approximately 10.5 miles. Up to 6 parking areas would be constructed or improved to provide better access for non-motorized recreation.

Action Alternative C

Action Alternative C would apply silvicultural treatments to 1,156 acres, harvesting approximately 7 MMBF of timber. This alternative treats fewer acres, requiring less extensive road use and construction. To access harvest units and transportation systems, 38.7 miles of road would be used. Approximately 29.3 miles requires maintenance or reconstruction. New construction of permanent road would not be required under this alternative; approximately 1 mile of new temporary road construction would be required; 13.7 miles would be reconstructed prior to use, and 17.0 miles would be closed after use. Road closures or abandonment would reduce open road status in the project area by approximately 10.5 miles. Up to 6 parking areas would be constructed or improved to provide better access for non-motorized recreation.

Rationale for the Proposed Decision

Selection of Alternative B along with mitigations common to all alternatives has been identified as the proposed decision. The advantages of Alternative B over other alternatives are based primarily on Alternative B best meeting the project objectives.

Action Alternative B does more to meet the objectives stated in Section 1.3 of the DEIS (p. 8) and the goals of DNRC's management philosophy. The DNRC will manage the lands in this project according to this philosophy, which states:

> *Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biological diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a stable forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream… In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be our primary source of revenue and our primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives.*

More acres would be treated under this Alternative and it would do a better job at meeting silvicultural objectives. Stand health and vigor would be improved on more acres as well as more acres being treated to develop into a desired future condition (ARM 36.11.405). Alternative B would improve more miles of existing roads and provide better access for long-term forest management while decreasing open road densities to the maximum extent practicable.

Alternative B would better meet DNRC's fiduciary responsibility by generating an estimated $2,427,040 for the School Trust and by maintaining a productive forest for future timber management. Refer to Table 2-2 in Chapter 2 of the DEIS for a summary comparison of the alternatives' achievement of project objectives.

Relationship of Issues and Public Comments to the Proposed Decision

Logging in Western Hemlock Stands (DEIS, 4.1.3 pg 80). The project area contains approximately 500 acres of mixed conifer stands that contain a variable component or small pockets of western hemlock. Hemlock typically occurs as a scattered component or in pockets 1 to 10 acres in size throughout this type. Alternative B would treat only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Based on SLI data and field observations, the more concentrated areas where western hemlock comprises approximately 40% or more of the overstory trees will not be treated. Of the 150 acres being treated, western hemlock makes up 10% or less of the stand composition compared to the 350 acres that are not being treated where hemlock makes up 40% or more of the stand composition. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center (DEIS, 4.8 pg 114)**.** In response to the DEIS, concerns were raised about logging near the Bigfork Nordic Center. The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. This project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by

improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. Improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

Logging Near Trail #544(DEIS, 4.8, pg 114 and errata pg 5-6). In response to the DEIS, a concern was raised about logging near the Broken Leg hiking trail (#544 on Flathead National Forest map). Proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of the trail by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail.

Old Growth Harvest (DEIS, 4.1.2, pg 79). Public concern was raised over the current amount and distribution of old growth relative to historic conditions. In the project area, one 22-acre stand is old growth. Alternative B not would enter this stand.

Fire Hazard (DEIS, 1.7.3.3, pg 13). The issue was raised that this project could increase the fire hazard in the project area by creating drier sites and leaving logging slash. This issue was eliminated from further study in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).

Road building and closures (DEIS, 4.1.3, pg 80)**.** Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. This alternative would reduce open road densities from 2.2 to 1.2 miles/sq. mile.

Grizzly Bear (DEIS, 4.1.3, pg 80). Alternative B would decrease open road densities. The DEIS states (pg. 108) that the access management plan would result in major positive benefits to grizzly bears if road closures are effective. Project activities would also be restricted during the spring (April 1 to June 30) when bears are most likely to be in the project area.

Weeds (DEIS, 4.1.7, pg 84). Alternative B could increase the potential for establishment of new noxious weeds by exposing mineral soil through logging and road building activities. This project would implement an integrated weed management approach to limit the potential for new infestations. Grass seeding disturbed areas associated with roadwork, washing of logging equipment, closing of roads, and treatment of existing weed populations would be part of the integrated approach to weeds. There is also a high likelihood that the area would be winter logged, which would greatly minimize soil disturbance.

Summary of Proposed Decision

The lands included in this project are held in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions. DNRC is required under law to administer these lands to produce the largest reasonable and legitimate return over the long run (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11; and 77-1-202 MCA). DNRC's management philosophy provides the framework to evaluate the alternatives. Specifically which alternative will provide the largest income while sustaining the capacity to produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream.

The proposed decision of Alternative B does the best at meeting our legal requirements of producing the largest measure of reasonable return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions. Action alternative B strikes the best balance of revenue with treatment for long-term timber productivity. This will better enable DNRC to meet our management philosophy and improve the ability of trust lands to generate income into the future. This alternative does not preclude other uses from occurring within the project area. The proposed project harvests timber in a manner that moves the forest toward desired future conditions while limiting effects to other valuable resources.

Comments and Responses

This section contains comments received from parties interested in the Foothills Timber Sale Project DEIS and DNRC's responses to those comments. The Foothills Project Interdisciplinary team carefully reviewed all comments. DNRC appreciates the public's interest in forest management on state trust lands. The decision-maker will carefully consider all comments when choosing a course of action for this project.

Comment Letter

From: D. Blank [dblank44@cyberport.net]
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2006 4:45 PM
To: Seigmund, Peter
Subject: Foothills Timber Sale DEIS
Dear Pete Seigmund and the DNRC,

I am very concerned about the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. I have enjoyed the quiet hemlock forest, trails, and skiing opportunities. Please don't log near the Nordic ski area, or in sight of any existing trails. Also please don't build any new roads or cut any hemlock forest. The area is of special importance because it is low elevation public land close to Kalispell. That makes it very significant for the health and well-being of people in the Flathead Valley.
Sincerely,
D. L. Blank
Box 953
Whitefish, MT 59937

DNRC Response

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.

Logging in Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Comment Letter

Mr. Seigmund,

We are glad to finally see some logging done on foothill road. We've lived on foothill road for over 28 years and are still amazed at how so many places look like dense jungles.

We had our property thinned in the mid 1990's and it looks great and substantially reduced the fire hazard. We hope the logging gets done and has the same results. Thank you for your time.

DON & CINDY BURNS JR
2270 FOOTHILL Rd KAL. MT
257-8562

DNRC Response

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response

Review Comments on the Foothill Timber Sale Draft EIS.

Overall I think a commendable job was done on the document. Some of your sister agencies should take a lesson from DNRC. However, I would like to make the following comments.

Truck traffic:

There doesn't seem to be an evaluation of cumulative effects on traffic safety – only some statements on not having control over hauling once it leaves the harvest site. There will be a lot of truckloads (est., 2,000 trips), probably hauled north, on roads already heavy with traffic with an already abysmal traffic history. This needs to be addressed whether or not DNRC has any control over it or not (MEPA is for meaningful disclosure).

Truck Traffic- Depending on the purchaser, logs from the proposed sale could be hauled north or south. Compared to the total volume of traffic, additional truck trips per day would not be likely to involve significant impacts. This issue of road safety was eliminated from detailed study in Chapter 1(DEIS section 1.7.3.2 pg. 13). MEPA directs state agencies to, "identify the issues that are not likely to involve significant impacts… the discussion of these issues in the EIS will be limited to a brief presentation of the reasons they will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. "

Aesthetics:

Although the effects to the visual resource were included as an issue there doesn't seem to have been much analysis done to really determine what the effects might be. There has been no mapping of distance zones from key viewing points, no determination of factors like visual variety or visual management objectives. It doesn't appear that the professional input of a trained landscape architect was used as the product does not look like the use of the latest science and no landscape architect was identified in the Appendix. I think this issue/resource needs to be revisited and given more attention.

Aesthetics - As the DEIS states on page 73, most of the project area has relatively flat topography and does not provide landscape type views from roads. Therefore, the predicted effects to aesthetics focus on the views from open roads and are described in primarily qualitative terms on pages 113-114 of the DEIS. This level of detail is proportionate to significance of the issue and is expected to provide adequate information for the decisionmaker and the public.

Economics

School funding - The effects to school funding is not put in proper perspective. How will it affect the Flathead Valley area and over what time period and how does it compare to the total school budget – is it significant or menial. As you explain the revenue is spread over the entire state, not reserved for the county in which the timber is harvested. This would suggest that a million dollar change in harvesting in Flathead County would have very little effect on any individual school district.

School Funding-It is difficult to identify the effects of any specific trust land management activity on a specific school district or area. Trust land revenues from all activities are pooled and then appropriated to the schools by the legislature as required by law. Consequently, the return from a single sale may not in any way be related to the trust funding in a particular school district. If this were not the case, schools in areas like the Flathead would probably receive less funding, since the majority of trust funds are earned by mineral, agriculture, grazing activities. These activities earn most of their revenue on the east side of the state and relatively little on the west side. The allocation of state school trust funds is a legislative allocation issue that is not directly tied to any specific trust project.

Property taxes on milling facilities - This section is misleading because it suggests that if a mill closes down property taxes are not paid and the school

Comment Letter

district gets shorted accordingly. First of all property taxes must still be paid on the property by whoever owns it. Second if the mill ceases to exist and property taxes are not paid the tax burden is then spread over the remaining taxed property in the county. This would be insignificant to the individual taxpayer. In the taxation process the tax burden is determined by the size of the proposed budget (which includes schools amongst many other things). The burden is then spread out over taxable property depending on its assessed valuation. The assessed valuation of property the magnitude of American Timber, which you use as an example, is insignificant in comparison to the present annual increase in assessed valuation in Flathead County. There are individual luxury homes in Flathead County that have higher assessed valuations than American Timber.

Employment and income. I think your direct employment effects numbers from Chuck Keegan are right on and these figures have not changed much over the past decade. You stated that there was not a county model you could use to estimate the indirect effects. This is not correct. You could have estimated the induced and indirect effects by going to some of the recent USFS timber sale EISs where effects were estimated using the IMPLAN economic impact model. The IMPLAN model allows impacts to be determined for individual counties or any group of counties. This would probably have resulted in a total effect of approximately 20 jobs per million board feet of timber harvested and processed. However it should be further described in light of the situation where the unemployment rate is presently so low that it could be said that we are approaching a labor shortage nation wide and even in the Flathead Valley. This can have an effect on employment dynamics, migration trends, housing demand and so on. If above average paying jobs are generated in the wood products industry locally who will fill these jobs? Will it be Flathead Valley residents or people from outside? The folks that worked at American Timber are long gone. Does it matter? You also need to state that these estimates are not in terms of continuing jobs – they are job years equivalents. For example one alternative is said to generate 99 direct jobs. This is 99 jobs but only for one year. If it takes 3 yrs to complete the harvest it will generate 33 direct job equivalents that will last for 3 yrs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Paul R, Beckley, Ph.D.
Consulting Economist econbeck@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 8112; Kalispell MT. 59904 January 28, 2006

DNRC Response

This is not to say however, that a particular project has no effect on trust revenues. Each project is important in the overall generation of revenue for distribution to the trusts.

Property taxes on milling facitilites-This intent of this section was to point out that the timber industry contributes to the local economy in other ways and that the loss of timber producing industry reduces this contribution. Admittedly, whoever owns the property must pay taxes on it, however, without the mill the value of the property and the associated property taxes are substantially reduced. In most cases, taxpayers would prefer to not have their taxes increased to compensate for this loss, even if the amount is small.

Employment and income - You are right, there are economic models available that could be used to estimate the indirect impacts associated with timber sales. The IMPLAN model is one another along the same line is available from Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI). Both of the models would work and provide some additional information about the indirect impact of the State Trust Land timber sales on the local economies. However, both of these models are relatively expensive to purchase and do not provide sufficient additional information to justify their use on state timber sales which are relative small when compared to the sales offered by USFS for example or the harvest activities of a private producer such as Plum Creek. Using the example of 20 jobs per mmbf you provided would nearly double the jobs impact from the sale. Even given that information, the impact would be relatively small when compared to total employment in the region and the industry. And you are right, the employment associated with the harvest of this timber needs to be distributed over the time it takes to complete the harvest. While this does not diminish the total "job years" produced by the sale, it does reduce the annual impact.

The employment effects of the sale could be exacerbated because of the tight labor market; however, our experience has been that mobility by timber industry workers is generally good and that this impact tends to be very small because of the relatively small size of our sales. So far, we have not heard complaints from the purchasers about finding qualified workers for their mills.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
From: Ken Campbell [caihlen@gmail.com] **Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2006 6:58 AM **To:** Seigmund, Peter **Cc:** nathan@oasisenviro.com **Subject:** Foothills Timber Sale Please acept this message as my support for the timber sale on Foothills Rd. I am a Bigfork Nordic Member and support this sale completely. Thanks Ken Campbell 3744 MT 209 Bigfork, MT 59911	Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process. DNRC appreciates the Bigfork Nordic Center's desire to collaborate on the use of this area for skiing and timber management.
From: Chuck Roady [croady@stoltzelumber.com] **Sent:** Friday, December 30, 2005 1:29 PM **To:** Seigmund, Peter **Subject:** Foothills Timber Sale Project Pete: Please accept this letter of support for the Foothills Timber Sale. Just hurry up and put it up for sale before more timber volume has died from insects & disease !! Try to salvage as much of the volume as possible. Make sure enough volume is harvested per acre to adequately reduce the fuel loading and hence lower the fire risk levels. Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Chuck Roady Chuck Roady Lands & Resource Manager F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co. 406-892-7005	Thank you for your input. Your comments will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

1/14/06

Dear DNRC:

As a Missoula native, the Swan Range has always been important to me & my Dad (UM '36) & his dad (Forestry professor UM 1922-36). Please consider the following points in the Foothills Timber Sale DEIS: 1) Do NOT log hemlock, increasingly rare as it is. 2) No new roads in this prime grizzly habitat. 3) No logging in Nordic Center vicinity where my family regularly skis. 4) No logging w/in sight of Broken Leg Trail #544 at foot Mt. areas. Thank you

Margaret A Cook

Margie Cook
212 East Nicklaus Ave.
Kalispell, MT 59901

DNRC

DNRC Response

Logging in Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

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Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

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Comment Letter

December 19, 2005

Pete Sigmund
Montana DNRC
2250 Hwy 93 North
Kalispell, MT. 59901

RE: Comments on Foothills Timber Sale

Dear Pete:

I support Action Alternative B for implementation of the Foothills Timber Sale Project because it would produce the greatest benefit to the school trust as well as bring the most acres under management and return them to productivity. Most of the foothills area is already overstocked and experiencing high levels of mortality.

Alternative B would also be the most beneficial for improving road maintenance and access for future management.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Chris Damrow
Forester
P.O. Box 1429
Columbia Falls, MT. 59912

DNRC Response

Thank you for your interest in this project. The Final Environmental Impact Statement does identify Alternative B as the agency's preferred alternative. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response

Lisa Discoe
P.O. Box 1677
Bigfork, MT 59911

January 28, 2006

Dear DNRC:

I am writing you today regarding my concerns for the proposed Foothills Timber Sale DEIS. I wish this to be included in the official comment record for this proposed sale.

My family and I live adjacent to lands involved in this proposed timber sale. I have spent many hours walking/hiking through this part of the forest. I have seen the effects of the last logging project that this land was subjected to. I still find plastic netting that was used to support the young trees planted after the logging was finished. This is something that was supposed to be taken care as part of that logging project. With this type of carelessness in regards to the past logging project, I propose that DNRC to never sell these public lands. Following are a few more reasons why I think the DNRC should never sell these public lands:

The proposed action is described on page 7 of the DEIS, as well as in the cover sheet and Executive Summary of that document. DNRC is not proposing to sell these lands as part of the Foothills Timber Sale project.

- The public schools would only benefit from the sale for one school year. If these lands were left untouched, students attending nature/science based outdoor schools could benefit for many years to come. Already these land have been used by Ravenwood Natural Science Center in the instruction of hundreds of students who have benefited greatly by being able to use these lands.

As described on page 8 of the DEIS, this project was designed in accordance with the long-term management philosophy of the DNRC. State land harvest levels are determined by a sustained yield study as mandated by the legislature. The purpose of that study is to ensure that the harvest level on state school trust land can continue unabated in perpetuity. This project would not prohibit the use of the area by students and other members of the public.

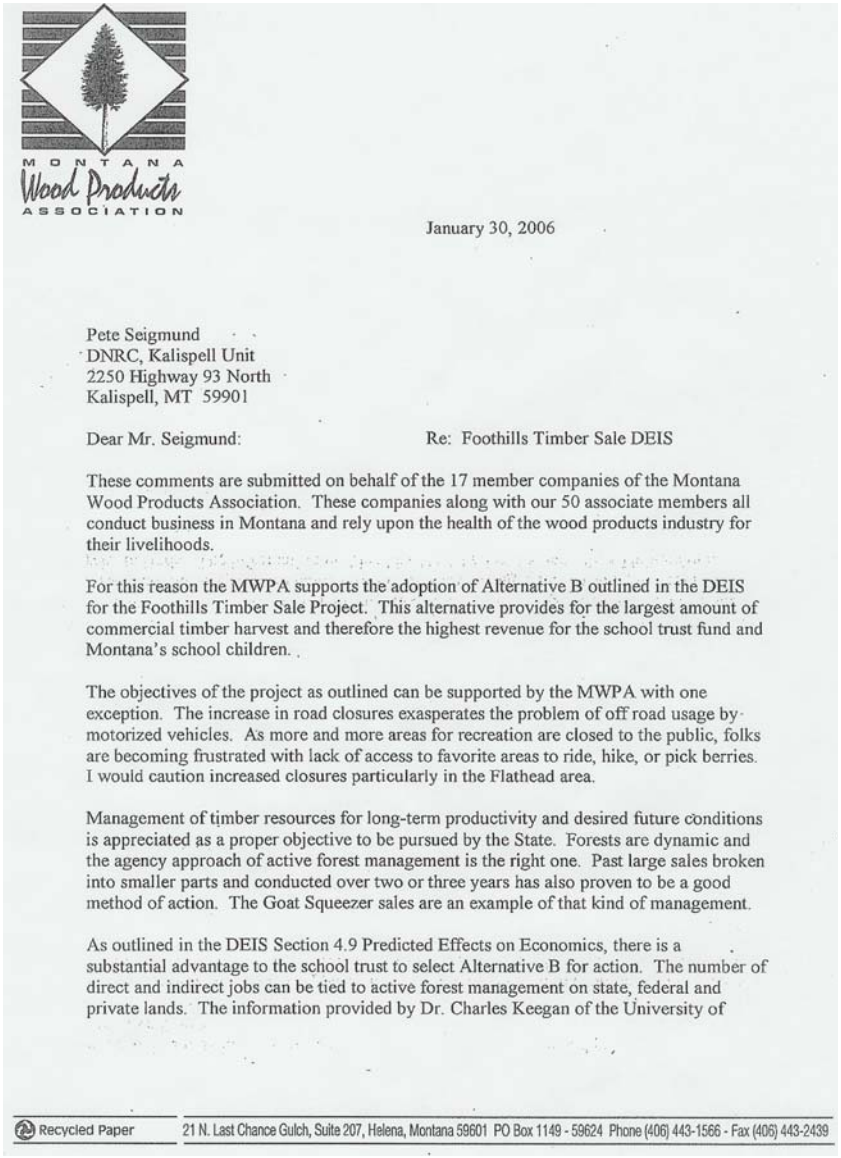
- The sale of this land would greatly disrupt wildlife habitat in the proposed area. I personally have had many wildlife encounters while walking through these lands. I have seen weasels, bobcats, deer, elk, black bears, pileated woodpeckers, grouse, bald eagles, coyotes, grizzly bears, and many snow shoe hare tracks in the snow. The swan ecosystem is very delicate, careful thought and planning should be used when doing anything that could disrupt/harm it. This proposed sale is not about careful thought or planning, it is about money from the sale of timber. Please think about all the harmful things that are being done to the environment that are out of our control, this is something that can be controlled, you the DNRC can choose to **not** sell this land.

DNRC is not proposing to sell these lands as part of the Foothills Timber Sale project. The purpose and need of the proposed timber sale are described in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. Wildlife issues were considered by the interdisciplinary team and the DEIS does include an evaluation of the impacts of the proposed project on wildlife in sections 3.5 (pages 58-72) and 4.5 (pages 98-112). These effects will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
There are many other aspects that I could touch upon, but these two are the most important to me on a personal level. I trust great judgment and care will be used by all when the final decision is made on this proposed Foothills Timber Sale. Sincerely, Lisa J. Discoe	Thank you for your comments. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response



MONTANA Wood Products ASSOCIATION

January 30, 2006

Pete Seigmund
DNRC, Kalispell Unit
2250 Highway 93 North
Kalispell, MT 59901

Dear Mr. Seigmund: Re: Foothills Timber Sale DEIS

These comments are submitted on behalf of the 17 member companies of the Montana Wood Products Association. These companies along with our 50 associate members all conduct business in Montana and rely upon the health of the wood products industry for their livelihoods.

For this reason the MWPA supports the adoption of Alternative B outlined in the DEIS for the Foothills Timber Sale Project. This alternative provides for the largest amount of commercial timber harvest and therefore the highest revenue for the school trust fund and Montana's school children.

The objectives of the project as outlined can be supported by the MWPA with one exception. The increase in road closures exasperates the problem of off road usage by motorized vehicles. As more and more areas for recreation are closed to the public, folks are becoming frustrated with lack of access to favorite areas to ride, hike, or pick berries. I would caution increased closures particularly in the Flathead area.

Management of timber resources for long-term productivity and desired future conditions is appreciated as a proper objective to be pursued by the State. Forests are dynamic and the agency approach of active forest management is the right one. Past large sales broken into smaller parts and conducted over two or three years has also proven to be a good method of action. The Goat Squeezer sales are an example of that kind of management.

As outlined in the DEIS Section 4.9 Predicted Effects on Economics, there is a substantial advantage to the school trust to select Alternative B for action. The number of direct and indirect jobs can be tied to active forest management on state, federal and private lands. The information provided by Dr. Charles Keegan of the University of

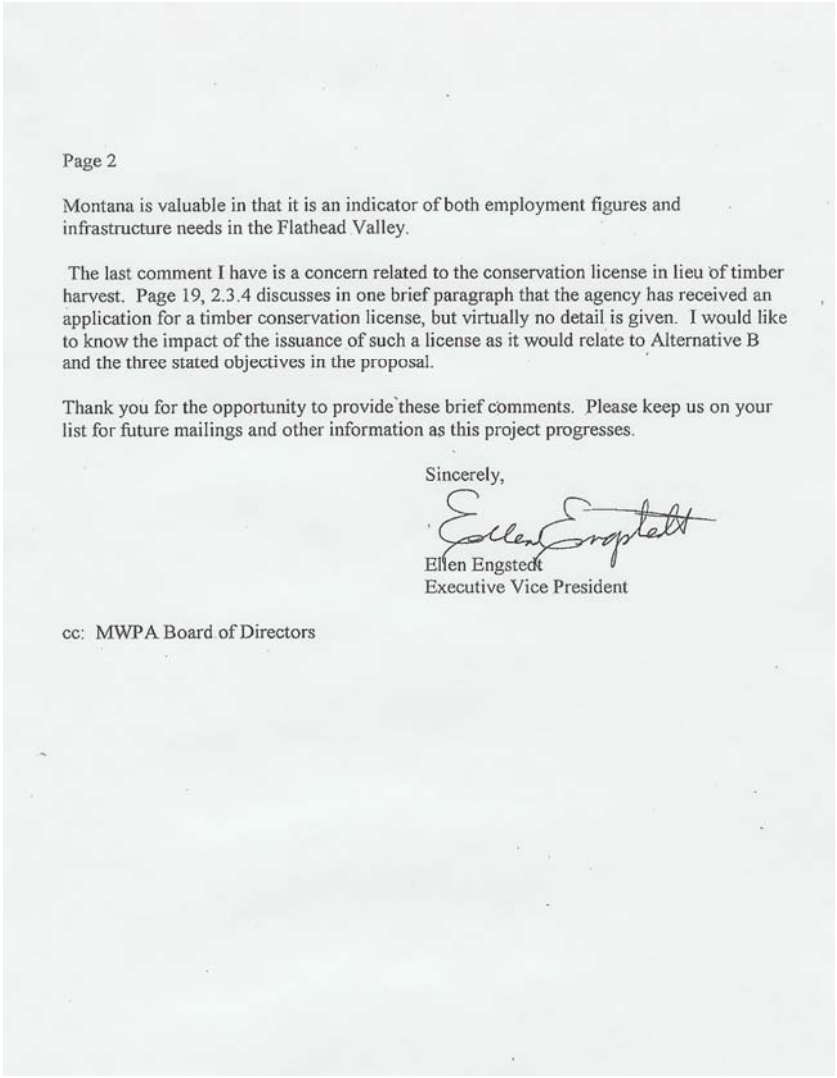
Recycled Paper 21 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 207, Helena, Montana 59601 PO Box 1149 - 59624 Phone (406) 443-1566 - Fax (406) 443-2439

Thank you for your interest in this project. The Final Environmental Impact Statement does identify Alternative B as the agency's preferred alternative. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

DNRC understands that there is a demand for motorized use on roads and trails to access forestland. The problem our agency faces is the increased road maintenance costs, weed-spraying costs, and timber theft associated with unregulated motorized use. Without payment from users, those costs continue but there is no return to the trust. Motorized use is and would continue to be allowed on designated open roads (ARM 35. 25.149). In addition, groups or individuals could apply for a land use license to conduct motorized recreation on specific roads or areas. Those requests would be considered and be subject to requirements outlined in MEPA.

Under either action alternative, the harvest would likely be broken into two smaller sales.

Comment Letter



Page 2

Montana is valuable in that it is an indicator of both employment figures and infrastructure needs in the Flathead Valley.

The last comment I have is a concern related to the conservation license in lieu of timber harvest. Page 19, 2.3.4 discusses in one brief paragraph that the agency has received an application for a timber conservation license, but virtually no detail is given. I would like to know the impact of the issuance of such a license as it would relate to Alternative B and the three stated objectives in the proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these brief comments. Please keep us on your list for future mailings and other information as this project progresses.

Sincerely,

Ellen Engstedt
Executive Vice President

cc: MWPA Board of Directors

DNRC Response

In accordance with ARM 36.11.452, DNRC may issue a conservation license in lieu of timber harvest. In May of 2005, the Foothills project newsletter opened a 60-day period for parties to file a notice of intent. One notice of intent was filed for a 10-year deferral of 1.2 acres from proposed harvest unit B1 of either action alternative. The applicant owns land adjacent to State lands on the east side of the Bear Creek parcel located in the E ½ SW ¼ of Section 24, Township 27 North, Range 19 West. The license would be for a visual buffer between his property and harvest unit B1. He has paid the $500 non-refundable fee. The estimated volume is 9 MBF valued at approximately $2,200. The deferred harvest would be incorporated into the normal sale bidding process, and the applicant would be required to bid on that volume. The license would be issued if the applicant were the highest bidder. Due to the small acreage and volume of this deferred harvest, effects would be very similar to effects of the other alternatives. The effects to economics are described on page 120 of the DEIS.

Comment Letter

Greetings:

I'm glad to be starting on the second version of my letter that I have been working on for over a week. This version begins after I have spent many hours of my 'days off', Saturday and Sunday, reading and studying the 126 page DEIS on the proposed Swan Foothills Timber Sale Project. I have to admit this was the first DEIS I have studied so I was struck by the breadth of issues addressed. I am grateful that so many issues are being considered because I feel the impact of this sale could indeed have consequences far beyond what might originally be assumed. It's not so simple as cutting down some trees so that we can continue to pay for the education of our children. Since I need to sleep tonight and work on Monday, I won't be able to discuss the issues to the degree I feel they deserve, so part of the intent of this letter is to suggest that much more time should be given to further conversation and investigation of this proposed sale. The most recent letter extending the comment deadline to 'Wednesday', January 30 created further confusion on the limits of the comment period. I have read your statements related to your attempts to publicize this project over the course of several years, but I have personally been unaware of the actual details of the project until a few weeks ago. And despite your good efforts, I can assure you that many people in the immediate neighborhoods of this project are still unaware of the proposals. For example, I spent 5 hours on Saturday with about 50 people from many neighborhoods around the Flathead who were all coming together to address the myriad of issues relating to land use planning and to developing a sound working growth policy for our area. I had a brief opportunity to mention the Foothills Timber Sale to a couple people in our Bigfork-Foothills sub-group and was surprised to learn that neither of them had heard anything about this project. Both of these individuals are extremely active already in 2 different planning groups in this immediate area and are devoting a great deal of personal time to insure that all the issues related to growth, development, and preservation of our resources are considered in relation to the needs of private property owners and the greater community and public entities. Both of these people would have quality input to offer regarding this proposed sale if given more time and more information as would many others.

DNRC Response

As described on pages 9-10 of the DEIS, the DNRC has provided a variety of opportunities for public involvement throughout development of this project. Due to the level of interest, the comment period on the DEIS was extended to 45 days.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
As pointed out in the DEIS, the project area is uniquely close to numerous pieces of private property as well as the more populated areas beyond. While it is fairly easy to attach a dollar figure to the quantity of board feet that could be harvested, how can we attach a dollar figure to the human value of the time spent by people recreating in the project areas ? Similarly, how can we put a $ amount on the diminished quality of experience for those people visiting the project area after a harvest ? Stated another way, I think most people, even the most dedicated urbanites, can relate to the idea of taking a casual walk through the woods, but who would feel honored to be invited on a walk through a clearcut ? The DEIS makes numerous references to a wide range of recreational use that is now occurring in the target forests, but nowhere does the DEIS suggest that the value of that recreation to the people of Montana could far outweigh the money to be gained from a timber sale. Reference is made in the DEIS to the fact that people now using this area might choose instead to go to Jewel Basin and motorized trails in the Peters Ridge area. I suspect that the author of the DEIS doesn't realize that Jewel Basin has already become so popular that many local people seeking an experience in nature already avoid the area. With the rate of growth that is happening here now and with the predicted acceleration of growth, we need more areas where people can enjoy quiet recreation, not fewer areas. To quote the DEIS on page 30 under Economics : "If timber from this project is not sold, this volume could come from sales elsewhere."	Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing "support" for the state's schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116). The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land, conservation lands or any other purpose that would remove the land from management without compensation. For example, while there may be value to the community for the retention of open space on state trust lands, as managers, we are legally bound to manage the lands unless the trusts are compensated for their retention as open space lands.
I own several pieces of property at the southern boundary of the proposed harvest area. My family residence is the closest private property to the proposed harvest, P2, in section 36. My business, a Montana corporation, is located on an adjacent property and generates nearly $ 6 million in gross sales nationwide on an annual basis. I have traveled all 50 states and nearly 30 foreign countries and choose to live where I do because I feel this truly is the last best place. I also believe that many people here, perhaps because they	

Comment Letter

haven't had the opportunity to view lots of other places firsthand, don't realize just how rare and precious this place is. There was a time when New York City, Chicago and LA were every bit as naturally beautiful as the Montana landscape. I have lived in many parts of the U.S. but have never lived anywhere that so many friends, relatives and business associates have wanted to visit, as confirmed by our guest book full of names. A majority of these visitors have joined my family and I on a wide variety of excursions through various portions of the target area. On average, I jog through the area several times a week year round. We also take short walks, extended hikes, ski, snowshoe, and bird watch. Without counting anyone else, I have literally spent hundreds of hours in various parts of the target area. On countless such ventures I have picked up a wide range of trash and litter from cigarette butts, cans and bottles, and shell cartridges to the non-biodegradable, synthetic measuring string your surveyors left behind. One hot day last summer I encountered one of my neighbors as I was returning from the target area. He noticed how much I was sweating and commented that I must have been running. I told him I had been pulling spotted knapweed out in the clearcuts. I don't have data to tell me when these clearcuts were harvested but the DEIS implies that most cutting happened in the '80's. While I appreciate the intention of the proposed harvest to promote a more diverse regenerated forest of Douglas fir, white pine, western larch, etc., it appears to me that the planting and natural seeding that has occurred in the many previous clearcuts has not been successful. I did not find any information in the DEIS that would assure me that new efforts after cutting would provide more successful regeneration.

With an interest in serving the community and at considerable personal expense, we renovated existing structures on one of our properties into a small rustic facility suitable for hosting small groups. We have never charged any of the groups using our facility. I have been an officer, board member, and active participant with Swan Mission Search and Rescue for many years and recently hosted a training sponsored by the Flathead County sheriff's office at our facility. The man-tracking training was led by an internationally

DNRC Response

The DNRC operates under forest management rules that pertain to regeneration of harvested stands. Specifically ARM 36.11.420 (10) states 'In all stands where a regeneration cut has been applied, the Department shall complete a regeneration survey promptly to ensure that treatment objectives and environmental commitments are met'.

Comment Letter

acclaimed authority and author in the field and was well attended by members of various search and rescue units from Montana, Idaho, Washington, and as far away as New York state. Some of the exercises took place in the target area. We were also the original host facility for Ravenwood Natural Science Center, which operates high quality outdoor science education programs throughout the Swan Foothills area. They have involved hundreds of grade school, junior high and high school students from a number of schools all across western Montana. Their 'classrooms' encompass or are immediately adjacent to the entire Foothills Timber Sale area. Having been educated at Northwestern University and been a founder and director of another outdoor educational program for youth, I can say with confidence that the experiences that some of these students have had with Ravenwood are nothing short of life-altering. These lands are supporting a quality of education that is uncommon in the classroom and whose value goes far beyond the simple dollars and cents revenue projected for this timber sale. There is no question that our schools need funding, but providing operating costs is no assurance that the light of enthusiastic learning will come on inside the student. I have witnessed Ravenwood succeeding in turning on those lights.

The DEIS is very good at listing a number of sensitive, threatened, big game and endangered species that could be impacted by this timber sale. I wish I had the time to discuss each one individually as they all deserve the attention and all are likely to be adversely affected as the DEIS points out. I will focus on the DEIS comments related to grizzly bears as they are largely representative of comments on the other affected species.

Here the writer copied and inserted page 66 of the DEIS
***(Section* 3.5.6, Grizzly Bear)**

Throughout the DEIS, there is considerable mention of the possible adverse effects that a harvest would have on big game, fishers, gray wolves, pileated woodpeckers, sensitive plants, snags and so on. The main solution for mitigating these many and varied negative impacts seems to be based on a reduction of motorized use throughout the entire target area.

DNRC Response

While the State Forest Land Management Plan states that, "In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be our primary source of revenue and our primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives…" (DEIS, page 8), timber harvesting is not an exclusive activity on trust lands. The proposed Foothills Timber Sale would not exclude other uses, such as science education programs.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
As is clearly stated in the DEIS excerpt above and at numerous other places in the document, all past efforts to limit motorized use of this area have been ineffective and are likely to continue to be ineffective. Based on the information stated in this DEIS, common sense, and observation of what is actually occurring in this target area, the only sensible alternative of the 3 so far proposed is Alternative A, leave it alone. Building new roads and making the improvements to the existing old logging roads that would be needed to accomplish a harvest, would appear as an open invitation to illegal motorized activity after the harvest. Quoting from page 44 of the DEIS : " Field review and aerial photo reviews of the proposed project area show that much of the proposed project area has been harvested in the past." The PC2 area targeted for harvest closest to my home is a relatively small forested area between 2 larger clearcuts that in 20 or so years since they were cut have not effectively regenerated. Interestingly to this whole discussion, the PC2 piece of woods happens to be the one and only stretch of woods where we have actually seen a black bear on one of our walks. There is, however, numerous bear sign throughout the area and we have seen both black and grizzly bears pass through our yard. I have also noticed that an extensive number of trees in this PC2 finger of forest have been painted with blue paint. I thought that was a rather presumptive move on the part of the DNRC since I don't believe a harvest has been approved for this piece of land. I don't know the significance of blue paint but judging from the species of trees and some of the snags painted I suspect these are the trees that would not be harvested. This then leads to the question of whether anyone walking through this area after it is clearcut would enjoy looking at the few remaining trees with blue paint on them at eye level. In light of this procedure an others practiced in this area, I found it interesting that there was an 'aesthetic' heading in the DEIS.	As described in section 4.8 of the DEIS (pages 114 and 115), the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under either action alternative. More effective closures combined with abandonment of some roads and road segments should be more effective at preventing illegal motorized use. Please see maps in the errata. DNRC has no personnel for enforcement of road closures. We rely on help from Forest Service and Fish Wildlife & Parks enforcement personnel. While the DEIS was out for public comment, the DNRC did some fieldwork to make efficient use of time and determine operational feasibility of the project. Some of the harvest units that are common to both action alternatives were marked, such as the leave trees in Unit PC2. This is necessary in some instances to be efficient and timely in preparing projects. Under an action alternative, the paint will likely persist for several years after harvest operations are complete.
This entire target area has immeasurably high value to the local and extended human community on a wide range of levels. Although heavily abused by illegal motorized use, the patches of forest that remain still offer suitable habitat for an extremely broad range of species and should not be degraded any further than they hav already been. Instead, our efforts should be directed to improving the closure of this area to illegal motorized use and improving the effectiveness of the previous ineffective regeneration efforts in the previously harvested forests.	Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing "support" for the state's schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116).

Comment Letter

This area is of great value to the public so these lands should definitely remain under DNRC control, but should be actively managed to foster the wide range of non-destructive activities that they can support. Since I, like many other residents of this area, was unaware of previous field trips in the target area, I would welcome such an opportunity for further dialogue. Thank you for this opportunity to share a small part of my perspective on this proposed sale.

Sincerely,
Jim Fiddler
P.O. Box 1677
Bigfork, MT 59911
837-2456

DNRC Response

The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land, conservation lands or any other purpose that would remove the land from management without compensation. For example, while there may be value to the community for the retention of open space on state trust lands, as managers, we are legally bound to manage the lands unless the trusts are compensated for their retention as open space lands.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

From: Mike & Amy Gunn [magunn@montanasky.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2006 5:14 PM
To: Schweitzer, Brian; Schweitzer, Brian
Cc: Seigmund, Peter; Sexton, Mary; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Johnson, Brad; Seigmund, Peter; Sexton, Mary; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Johnson, Brad
Subject: DNRC Foothills timber sale

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express pinion on the DNRC 's Foothill timber sale. Please do not log the hemlock forests in the strawberry lake area, or any forest in view of the Bigfork community Nordic center or Mt Aeneas Trails(#544). These are special forested areas where we xc ski and hike, enjoying the accesible peace and beauty there!

There are already many roads running through the area considered-- building more would upset the animal habitats these areas provide, also making illegal motorized access much easier.

My husband and I would appreciate being counted as opposing the proposed amount of logging and to logging at all in some of the areas, as well.

Thank you for your attention.

Amy & Michael Gunn
Po Box 1552
Bigfork, MT 59911

DNRC Response

Logging in Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

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Comment Letter

Untitled

1/27/06

Turner Ranch
2815 Foothill Rd
Kalispell, Mt 59901

DNRC RECEIVED JAN 31 2005 NW Land Office KALISPELL MT

DNRC JAN 31 2005 NW Land Office KALISPELL MT

Dear Sirs:

Regarding proposed DNRC Foothill Timber Sale

As a long time rancher and post yard owner I am concerned by this proposal. I am very unhappy with the follow up management. The last time it was logged it took several planting for the re-planted trees to come back. Also the extra use on it not being controled. There is no plan in place to address this to my notion. It increases the fire danger from motorized use. We do not have many wet site left, and I belive we need to save them.

Sincerely

Sheila Grob

DNRC Response

The DNRC operates under forest management rules that pertain to regeneration of harvested stands. Specifically ARM 36.11.420 (10) states 'In all stands where a regeneration cut has been applied, the Department shall complete a regeneration survey promptly to ensure that treatment objectives and environmental commitments are met'.

As described on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives. As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.

Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).

Comment Letter

DNRC Response

QuickTime™ and a
Photo - JPEG decompresso
are needed to see this picture

Swan View Coalition

"People Helping People Help the Earth"
3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901
406-755-1379 www.swanview.org

January 30, 2006

Governor Brian Schweitzer
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

Brad Johnson - Secretary of State
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

Linda McCulloch - Sup. Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

John Morrison - State Auditor
P.O. Box 4009
Helena, MT 59604-4009

Michael McGrath - Attorney General
215 N. Sanders, P.O. Box 201401
Helena, MT 59620-1401

Mary Sexton - Director DNRC
PO Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601

Pete Seigmund - DNRC Forester
2250 Hwy 93 North
Kalispell, MT 59901

Re: Comments on DNRC Foothills Timber Sale DEIS

Dear Folks at DNRC and Members of the State Land Board;

The DNRC land targeted for logging in the Foothills Timber Sale DEIS are of prime value to both wildlife and non-motorized public recreation. Our home office is located on Foothill Road and many of our members reside along Foothill Road and other portions of the Swan Foothills.

We urge the Land Board and DNRC to never sell these important lands for private development. We also urge the Land Board and DNRC to not log them in a manner that diminishes the unique hemlock forests found here, nor diminishes the value of these forests for wildlife and non-motorized public recreation.

We find the proposed Foothills Timber Sale will most certainly, significantly and inappropriately diminish these values.

The proposed action is described on page 7 of the DEIS, as well as in the cover sheet and Executive Summary of that document. DNRC is not proposing to sell these lands as part of the Foothills Timber Sale project.

Comment Letter

We ask the Land Board to not approve of this timber sale. Moreover, we find the DEIS legally and factually deficient. We ask that DNRC correct these deficiencies, then hold public field tours of the area this summer prior to bringing this proposal before the Land Board.

Our reasons for these conclusions and request are detailed below. We thank the Land Board and DNRC for their attention to these comments and ask that they be included in the formal public comment record.

The Public Value of these Swan Foothill DNRC Lands

The DNRC lands evaluated in the Foothills Timber Sale DEIS generally lie between private and National Forest lands. Hence, they provide public access to both the DNRC lands themselves and neighboring National Forest Lands.

If these DNRC lands are sold for private home development, as some DNRC officials have warned may happen, public access to the DNRC lands would be prohibited. Consequently, public access to neighboring National Forest lands would be restricted to only the Peters Ridge Road, Strawberry Lake Road, Jewel Basin Road, and Patterson Creek Road.

Besides providing unlimited non-motorized access to National Forest lands to the east, these DNRC lands contain exceptional forests, including unique hemlock forests, and wildlife habitat. As private lands in the area are increasingly developed and subdivided, the DNRC lands are all the more prized for public big game hunting, bird watching, mountain biking, hiking, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing, and as prime grizzly bear habitat.

It is common to see dozens of vehicles parked along Foothill Road as folks enjoy non-motorized recreation on these DNRC lands, their unique hemlock forests, and upland National Forest lands. Many local residents use these DNRC lands without even getting in a car, using them as quality nearby areas to walk the dogs or simply enjoy the peace and quiet after a long day or week at work.

DNRC Response

As described in section 1.7.1 on page 9 of the document, the DEIS was prepared by an interdisciplinary team in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Public involvement included a public field trip, as well as additional site visits with individual interested parties and the project leader.

The Foothills Timber Sale would not change the ownership of private, DNRC, or National Forest land. Public access is not currently provided to all parcels within the project area. Specifically, the Patterson Creek parcel is accessed by a private road and does not provide for legal public access.

DNRC is not proposing to sell any land as part of the Foothills Timber Sale Project.

Comment Letter

Summary of Impacts to these Public Values

Either of the DEIS timber sale alternatives will needlessly diminish these public values. These impacts include but are not limited to:

1. Logging using clear-cutting and other "regeneration harvest" accompanied by soil scarification will increase noxious weed infestations and will dry the forest floor, increasing the risk of wildfire near private residences - regardless of slash treatment.

2. Reconstructing existing roads and constructing new roads, however temporary, will exacerbate the existing problem of illegal use of closed DNRC roads by motorized vehicles.

3. The logging of hemlock forest will destroy an irreplaceable amenity that has become increasingly rare in this area due to past logging by private parties, DNRC and the Forest Service. Once viewed as junk wood, these unique hemlock forests instead provide exceptional refuge for quiet contemplation, scientific inquiry and spiritual rejuvenation.

4. The above will not only impact human uses of the area, but will also decrease wildlife security by decreasing hiding cover and improving road access.

5. DNRC promises of more effective road closures and noxious weed management are without credibility, given DNRC's failure to address these problems in the past and continuing limits on DNRC funding. Based on past experience, the public can fully expect DNRC to simply turn its back on this area once it has gotten what it wants for timber - as it has done before.

6. Taken at face value, the meager profit claimed for the School Trust would be quickly erased were DNRC to undertake the type of weed, road management, and law enforcement necessary to correct the longstanding management problems in this area - which will only be exacerbated by a Foothills Timber Sale.

The DEIS is Legally and Factually Deficient

The DEIS does not provide the level of public disclosure and factual accuracy required by law.

DNRC Response

1. DNRC shares the concern of noxious weeds in the project area. As described in section 4.1.7 on page 84 of the DEIS, application of integrated weed management techniques would address the occurrences and spread of noxious weeds. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).
2. As described in section 4.8 on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives.
3. As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.
4. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (please refer to section 4.5.6 Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 of the DEIS and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.
5. Without a specific identification of what area or past situation this comment is referring, DNRC will respond in general. For noxious weed management and road closure related issues, the DEIS describes the existing condition and compares the proposed timber sale to the no-action alternative. Compared to the no-action alternative, the proposed sale would provide more funding for weed and road management.
6. DNRC would collect a forest improvement fee in addition to the stumpage dollars we receive for the timber that is harvested. This forest improvement money would be used to spray weeds, conduct road maintenance operations, plant trees, treat slash, and other follow-up treatments. In absence of the timber sale, we would not collect forest improvement money to do these types of projects.

Comment Letter

It does not address all the issues raised during scoping, does not provide adequate maps or resource inventories, and does not square with on-the-ground circumstances. As a result, the public is not able to get a clear picture of what DNRC intends to do nor a clear picture of the environmental impacts.

These deficiencies include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

A. The maps in the DEIS are of a scale too small to be meaningful. Even larger scale maps provided by Pete Siegmund (approximately 3" per mile) fail in important ways: 1) The keys for harvest methods do not square with the key patterns shown on the harvest units. 2) No road numbers are given. For example, how is the public to know the effects of Road BL2 and proposed logging on the already "compromised mountain moonwort population at the end of this road" if the road and its end are not clearly identified on a map?

B. The DEIS at 114 states that "timber harvest unit BC2 follows or includes approximately 1200 feet of the USFS trail in Section 2." Unit boundary flagging on the ground indicates unit BC2 indeed would include a big part of the Broken Leg Trail #544. Confusion abounds, however, because the larger scale maps provided by Pete Siegmund show unit BC2 does not even touch the trail, let alone include or border nearly a quarter-mile of it! There is no way to tell from the DEIS and the maps whether and to what extent proposed logging will or will not include the area surrounding this very popular hiking and skiing trail.

C. The DEIS contains no map or inventory of western hemlock forests in the area. Instead, the hemlock forests are masked within the broader category of Mixed Conifer forest. This, in turn, makes it impossible for the public or decision maker to determine exactly where and in what quantities hemlock forest will either be protected, deferred temporarily from logging, or logged under the Foothills Timber Sale.

D. While we appreciate the time Pete Siegmund took to talk with us about the DEIS and to provide us the larger scale maps, many of our questions Pete could not answer until he is able to do further field reconnaissance this summer. Indeed, it became apparent DNRC is not

DNRC Response

A. The maps in the DEIS are on a small scale which did make them more difficult to read. The harvest units are clearly evident and the legend given for the harvest methods do match with the units on the map. Better quality maps have been produced for the final EIS and are included in the errata. Section 4.1.6 (pg. 83) describes the location and status of Road BL-2 for both the no-action alternative and the action alternatives.

B. Section 4.8 of the DEIS is correct in describing the spatial relationship of the hiking trail and the harvest unit. Proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would have impacted approximately 1200 feet of the trail by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail.

C. DNRC uses our Stand Level Inventory (SLI) protocol to assign forest types to individual stands. To be consistent in our analysis from project to project, it is important to use our SLI types. There is not a specific western hemlock cover type in our SLI. Please see section 4.1.3 Distribution of Western Hemlock stands in the EIS, pg. 80. Both action alternatives include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area.

D. Without an identification of the “many questions” that Pete was unable to answer, DNRC is unable to specifically address them in this response. Proposed temporary and permanent new roads are described for each alternative on page 19 in the DEIS. In addition, the Errata includes a detailed map. Although fieldwork would determine some of the final measurements and details of the project, the DEIS provides the appropriate level of information to disclose effects and inform the decision-maker.

yet certain about exact road locations and forest types to be included in the two action alternatives in the DEIS. For the DEIS public review and comment process to be meaningful, this information must be included in the DEIS, not left to perhaps be disclosed in the FEIS - and maybe never be disclosed at all, not even to the Land Board prior to its decision.

Some More Specific Concerns

Other specific concerns we have with the Foothills Timber Sale alternatives, DEIS, and DNRC management of the area include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

a. The DEIS, at 80, states that 150 acres of "pockets" of hemlock would be logged to favor and provide growing space for western larch, Douglas-fir, or western white pine. These latter tree species are in no short supply, while western hemlock is unique on DNRC lands, even in the Foothills area. Logging these pockets of hemlock will not only destroy the hemlock component and decrease diversity, but will open the canopy, dry the forest floor, and increase the risk of wildfire on these lands near many private residences.

As stated earlier, the maps in the DEIS and those provided by Pete Siegmund do not show the locations of hemlock forest. Based on our first-hand knowledge of the area, however, we find that substantial areas of hemlock forest would be logged in units K2, K3, K4 and E1. Moreover, the new road construction proposed under Alternative B to access unit K4 would carve a large swath through a stand of especially large hemlock trees in the vicinity of the gully that runs diagonally upwards from southwest to the northeast in the southeast quarter of Section 21.

While we appreciate DNRC does not intend to log the 22 acre old growth hemlock stand in Section 36 at this time, it remains uncertain this old growth will be preserved over time. DNRC is giving short shrift to other old hemlock forest in the area, as described earlier. These hemlock forests not only provide exceptionally unique wildlife habitats and recreational experiences, they help identify and sustain the moist habitat types desired in forests near private residences. Logging, thinning, or otherwise opening the tree canopy in these

a. Logging in Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands. This fire risk issue was eliminated from further study in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).

Comment Letter

forests will dry the forest floor and understory by exposing them to more sun and air movement, increasing the danger and likelihood of wildfire in spite of slash treatments. We don't want this result in our neighborhood!

b. The DEIS, at 81, states diverse "multistoried stand structures in the Foothills area would be reduced from 84% to 67% and increase the percentage of simpler stand structures from 16% to 34%". This simplification of stand structures makes these forests less diverse, more susceptible to insects and disease, less valuable as wildlife habitat and hiding cover, and less aesthetic for human recreation and contemplation.

Page 81 also states closed canopy forest will decrease from 92% to 66%. As stated earlier, opening the canopy will increase the likelihood of wildfire and, as detailed below, the rate of spread of wildfire.

c. DNRC is a contributor to and distributor of "Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner." This publication shows that open pine and mixed conifer forests can be consumed by wildfire at a rate ten times that of "dense conifer forest." In this neighborhood, we prefer closed canopy forests that shade the forest floor and understory, keeping it moist and more devoid of the fine fuels that hasten the rate of fire spread. The DEIS fails outright to address this issue and instead relies on the tired and disproved claim that removing large trees reduces fire danger. In fact, removing the bole of large trees as logs and leaving the fine fuels in tops and limbs increases the risk of fire, in spite of slash treatments which often amount to little more than lopping the slash to below knee height.

d. DNRC proposes to improve and reconstruct existing roads and construct new roads in the Foothills area. This will have significant negative impacts to wildlife and recreation and will increase the risk of wildfire, especially given DNRC's poor track record on enforcing road closures and its lame promise that it hopes to do better.

Indeed, the DEIS at 108 admits the "long-term success of these closures is uncertain given the current levels of illegal motorized use, the flat topography, lack of enforcement, and the high level of human development surrounding the project area." Opening up dense forest

DNRC Response

b. As described in section 4.1.5 of the DEIS, both action alternatives would promote appropriate cover type and decrease susceptibility of stands to beetle infestations and stem decays. This fire risk issue was eliminated from further study in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).

c. The reference to this publication is taken out of context and the use of the word 'consumed' is not present in the publication in regards to rates of spread for different forest types. The DEIS does address this issue in section 1.7.3.3 on page 13 of the DEIS.

d. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see section 4.5.6 Grizzly Bear on page 107 of the DEIS and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads. DNRC has no personnel for enforcement of road closures. We cooperate with Forest Service and Fish Wildlife & Parks enforcement personnel.

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through logging and thinning makes this situation worse and provides more opportunity for the unauthorized "pioneering" of roads. Indeed, the DEIS, at 107, finds that leaving the forest as it is "could deter the [illegal] pioneering of new roads."

One example of DNRC's lame attempts to control illegal motorized vehicle use off-road and on closed roads are the signs DNRC posted along Strawberry Lake Road. They read simply "State Land Recreation Use Rules Apply" and the spaces for local DNRC contact information are left blank. If DNRC intends that motorized vehicle not be operated on closed roads and off-road (as required by the ARM), then say so! If a recreation use permit is required, then say so! Yesterday I saw fresh 4-wheel ATV tracks on and off numerous closed DNRC roads immediately north of Strawberry Lake Road - having entered past these DNRC signs, many of which are now shot up beyond recognition.

All of this has significant ramifications for threatened grizzly bear, which DNRC has a duty to not "take" via either its acts or omissions. The DEIS acknowledges the project area "lies in important spring habitat", yet proposes to at best lower open road density from 3.6 to 3.1 miles per square mile (page 109), while acknowledging "the rampant illegal motorized us of restricted roads" likely increases the open road density to 8.7 miles per square mile (page 66). The South Fork Grizzly Bear Study conducted by Mace and others found that open road densities began to significantly displace grizzly bear when they exceeded 1 mile per square mile. Both current and proposed open road densities in the DNRC project area are entirely inadequate and unacceptable - and most certainly result in unauthorized "take" of grizzly bear. DNRC must work to secure these important grizzly bear habitats, rather than make them less secure through logging and road improvements that decrease hiding cover and exacerbate existing problems with road closure effectiveness.

e. DNRC foothills lands are rife with noxious weeds. For example, the lands north of Strawberry Lake Road are overwhelmed with knapweed along and on the drier road openings and hawkweed is flourishing in the more shaded and moist areas. DNRC has failed to control this infestation since its last logging projects in the area. Why

DNRC Response

The road densities reported in the Draft EIS incorrectly included some road segments outside the project area. Correcting these calculations resulted in current open road densities of 2.2 miles/sq. mile. Following the project, road densities would decrease to 1.2 miles/sq. miles by DNRC restricting all roads where DNRC retains complete control over management of the road. The roads that would remain open following completion of the project are county roads and roads with easements. Restricting any county or easement road is outside the purview of DNRC. Some of the roads with easements are restricted to the public. However, since DNRC can not control the use of these roads, the easement roads are analyzed as open roads regardless of public access. By restricting all roads completely controlled by DNRC, implementing actions to increase effectiveness and compliance with road restrictions on these roads, and retaining visual screening along open roads, DNRC has taken appropriate action to mitigate effects to grizzly bears.

e. As described on page 84 of the DEIS, application of integrated weed management techniques would reduce the occurrences and spread of noxious weeds. DNRC would collect a forest improvement fee in addition to the stumpage dollars we receive for the timber that is harvested. This forest improvement money would be used to spray

should the public now believe DNRC will improve this situation while logging nearly 1500 acres, intentionally scarifying soils as site preparation, and constructing or reconstructing up to 35 miles of road - all of which will promote the spread of noxious weeds?

f. We wrote DNRC in support of the Forest Service's request for a legal easement for the first portions of its Broken Leg Trail #544 and Crater Notch Trail #182, which the Forest Service purchased in 2002 for $3900. This according to page 74 of the DEIS, which incorrectly states these trails originate at Strawberry Lake Road, rather than Jewel Basin Road in Section 2. Meanwhile, Stoltze Land and Lumber logged its land in neighboring Section 1, turning about a half mile of the Broken Leg Trail into a logging road.

DNRC now propose to log along or across nearly a quarter mile of the Broken Leg Trail. The sum result would be that most of the first mile of this trail will be logged forest, skid trails and logging road, rather than the first class, non-motorized hiking trail for which we and others urged the Forest Service be granted legal easement! We urge DNRC to recognize the unparalleled importance of this recreational trail and not log within sight of it. To log there is the surest way for DNRC to shoot itself in the foot in terms of its public relations.

g. Either logging alternative in the DEIS will reduce pileated woodpecker nesting habitat by some 700 - 800 acres. The DEIS, at 110, also notes that nesting and foraging habitat is expected to decline as neighboring private lands are developed. DNRC assumes without basis that nesting and foraging habitat is expected to be retained on neighboring Forest Service lands. We again urge DNRC to rethink the important niche its lands fill in this area between private and federal lands, then act to protect recreation and wildlife values on its lands rather than diminish them!

Conclusion

DNRC provides too little in its DEIS and asks too much of the public, decision maker, and State Land Board. To the degree the DEIS does provide an accurate picture of DNRC's failure at road closure enforcement and noxious weed management, it then without any factual support whatsoever, asks the public, and Land Board to trust

weeds, conduct road maintenance operations, plant trees, treat slash, and other follow-up treatments. In absence of the timber sale, we would not collect forest improvement money to do these types of projects.

f. The correction to road name is noted in the FEIS errata. Section 4.8 of the DEIS is correct in describing that proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would have impacted approximately 1200 feet of the trail by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail.

g. Section 4.5.8 does state that pileated nesting habitat would be reduced under either action alternative. Snags and snag recruit would be retained as mitigation. On page 110, the DEIS also states that regeneration of shade intolerant species and decreased illegal firewood cutting could provide a long-term benefit to pileateds.

Comment Letter

DNRC will miraculously resolve these problems after exacerbating them via the Foothills Timber Sale.

As documented in this letter and in the DEIS, DNRC itself has no reason to believe its proposed Foothills Timber Sale and road management will improve in any way whatsoever over DNRC's past management of this area. We ask that DNRC correct the deficiencies we have noted in its DEIS, then hold public field tours this summer to further discuss these issues prior to forwarding a recommendation to the Land Board.

Suggestions

We suggest that DNRC rethink the way it views and has historically managed these lands sandwiched between private and federal lands. We believe there are creative ways for DNRC to raise money for the School Trust while safeguarding the value of these lands for public non-motorized recreation and wildlife, rather than diminishing these values through a Foothills Timber Sale.

While we are still in the process of examining the merits of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), we ask that DNRC consider positioning itself as a source area for TDRs as private lands are developed. Were DNRC to participate constructively in the current revision of the Flathead County Growth Policy, it could help establish limits on private development that would provide the incentive for developers to purchase TDRs from DNRC or private TDR source areas.

In other words, as private land is developed in the Flathead, DNRC could be forward thinking and position itself to receive income for the School Trust for TDRs intended to conserve DNRC lands rather than sell those lands or diminish their value for public non-motorized recreation and wildlife. For this to happen, however, DNRC must refocus on managing its lands as conservation areas rather than the traditional source areas for the export of timber.

Please keep us informed of any public field tours, issuance of any supplement to the DEIS or an FEIS, and when this matter is to be brought before the Land Board.

Sincerely,

Keith J. Hammer - Chair

DNRC Response

As described in section 1.7.1 on page 9 of the document, the DEIS was prepared by an interdisciplinary team in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Public involvement included a public field trip, as well as additional site visits with individual interested parties and the project leader.

As described in section 1.2 on page 8 of the DEIS, this project was designed in accordance with the long-term management philosophy of the DNRC. Montana Code Annotated (MCA 77- 5-116) stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land, conservation lands or any other purpose that would remove the land from management without compensation.

In accordance with ARM 36.11.452, DNRC may issue a conservation license in lieu of timber harvest. In May of 2005, the Foothills project newsletter opened a 60-day period for parties to file a notice of intent. One notice of intent was filed for a 10-year deferral of 1.2 acres from proposed harvest unit B1 of either action alternative. As stated in the DEIS on page 19, this conservation license was included as a component of either action alternative. No other ways to generate a comparable income were identified during the public participation process. DNRC's collaborative efforts with the Bigfork Nordic club indicate that timber management and other methods of generating revenue are compatible.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

From: Brett Holmquist [brett@ravenwoodnsc.org]
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2006 4:25 PM
To: Schweitzer, Brian; Johnson, Brad; McCulloch, Linda; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Morrison, John; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter; planningweb@co.flathead.mt.us
Subject: Foothills Timber Sale DEIS comments
To all concerned:

We would like to express our deep concern over the proposed timber sale planned for the DNRC lands in the Foothills area of the Swan Range east of Bigfork. We live adjacent to this forest and recreated, work, hunt, and learn in it throughout the year. My primary point is to question the value of the proposed timber sale in terms dollars vs. the many other benefits it provides to citizens of the State of Montana (notwithstanding our school children who do benefit directly from timber sales on state land).

Past cuts in this area by DNRC have left behind a legacy of illegal and unchecked motorized use, a swath of invasive noxious weeds, a marred landscape of clear-cuts which struggle over 20 years later to regenerate after what appears to have been a complete razing of the forest leaving wide, open spaces that are dry, full of weeds, and difficult for animals to incorporate into their survival patterns. This manner of management MUST be changed dramatically in order to preserve the myriad public benefits this forest currently (even in it's delapetated state) provides.

There is no doubt that active management is necessary, but we would suggest that the following points need to be addressed more clearly than the current DEIS seems to put forth.

The value of rare hemlock forests, which provide excellent habitat for a number of game and non-game animals as well as an excellent fire break between wildlands and residential areas, is far greater than the pulpwood it would provide in any sale (it is my understanding that pulpwood is not even viable economically as it costs more to cut and transport than it's worth at this time).

No new roads should be built for any management activity. There are plenty in there already from previous cuts. AND, as the DEIS clearly points out, a plan for mitigating the rampant illegal motorized use of these roads is the ONLY chance we have of maintaining the

DNRC Response

Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing "support" for the state's schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116). The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land, conservation lands or any other purpose that would remove the land from management without compensation. For example, while there may be value to the community for the retention of open space on state trust lands, as managers, we are legally bound to manage the lands unless the trusts are compensated for their retention as open space lands.

As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

As described in the DEIS, both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6 Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads. DNRC has no personnel for enforcement of road closures and cooperates with Forest Service and Fish Wildlife & Parks

integrity of this forest as critical habitat for grizzly bears, elk (winter use is extensive), white-tailed deer, fisher, mountain lions, bobcat, pileated woodpeckers, goshawks, and so many more. This forest serves as a buffer between encroaching development and an extensive system of high mountain national forest lands. Logging in the manner proposed in any of the timber sale options in the DEIS does not come near to providing adequate protection during or after the cut for this rare and critical wildlife habitat. Without road closure enforcement there's no chance but to lose a significant level of forest integrity.

enforcement personnel. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives.

Two heavily used public recreation areas are not specifically noted for preservation in the DEIS. Both the Bigfork Community Nordic Center ski trails and Broken Leg Trail #544 at the foot of Mount Aeneas should be preserved specifically to maintain their invaluable and irreplaceable aesthetic value to the citizens of this region and our visitors.

The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land. As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

It is our understanding that this forest was once comprised of enormous old growth larch, white pine, ponderosa, and even cedar, a few of which still stand in tucked away drainages. It is now overgrown, as the DEIS states, with often diseased grand fir stands. Because of the rare aspect and topography of this transitional landscape, if we are to log, it should be with the intention of managing these lands back to their original health. This will take considerable time, effort, and public support. This kind of thinking and action will provide far greater benefits to our children, our future generations, and the greater community of life with whom we share this land and depend on in both subtle and obvious ways (from clean air and water to big game hunting) than any of the proposed timber sale alternatives state in the DEIS.

If we are to preserve this unique landscape, we must begin now, so I suggest a longer public comment period and increased efforts to invite more public input and a redrafting of the EIS to include long range solutions that offer both revenue from carefully planned and executed timber sales and preservation and enhancement of critical wildlife habitat and recreational and educational opportunities for the growing number of people who will use this area in coming years.

As described in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.5 of the DEIS, both action alternatives would promote appropriate cover type, including western larch and white pine, and decrease susceptibility of stands to beetle infestations and stem decays. While the State Forest Land Management Plan states that, "In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be our primary source of revenue and our primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives…" (DEIS, page 8), timber harvesting is not an exclusive activity on trust lands. The proposed Foothills Timber Sale would not exclude other uses, such as science education programs.

Lastly, we would like to cite our own experience as natural science and wilderness educators who know this land very well through both

Comment Letter

personal and professional experiences there. As co-founders and directors of Ravenwood Natural Science Center we provide field study opportunities for local and regional school groups, many of which occur in the proposed timber sale sections. Hundreds of kids and parents get to see their own state forest through new eyes as they discover the secrets of the animals and plants who make their home there, learn about watersheds and how ecosystems work in general. Needless to say, their natural curiosities rarely lead them toward the old clearcuts and they often wonder why the forest was managed in this way. The proximity (saves precious time and gas), the diversity of plant and wildlife species (there are places where you can touch seven different tree species in two steps on this forest), and remaining aesthetic beauty of these forest lands are ideal for this kind of public education. This education has an immeasurable alternative value compared to that of the short term dollar amount we can gain (and this seems questionable at best after looking at the DEIS) from the proposed timber sales.

How exciting would it be to see local schools partner with DNRC to conduct surveys, make and conduct management plans, enforce road closures (we protect what we love), and hand off a world class public asset to future generations to come. Now that's public trust at it's best.

Respectfully,

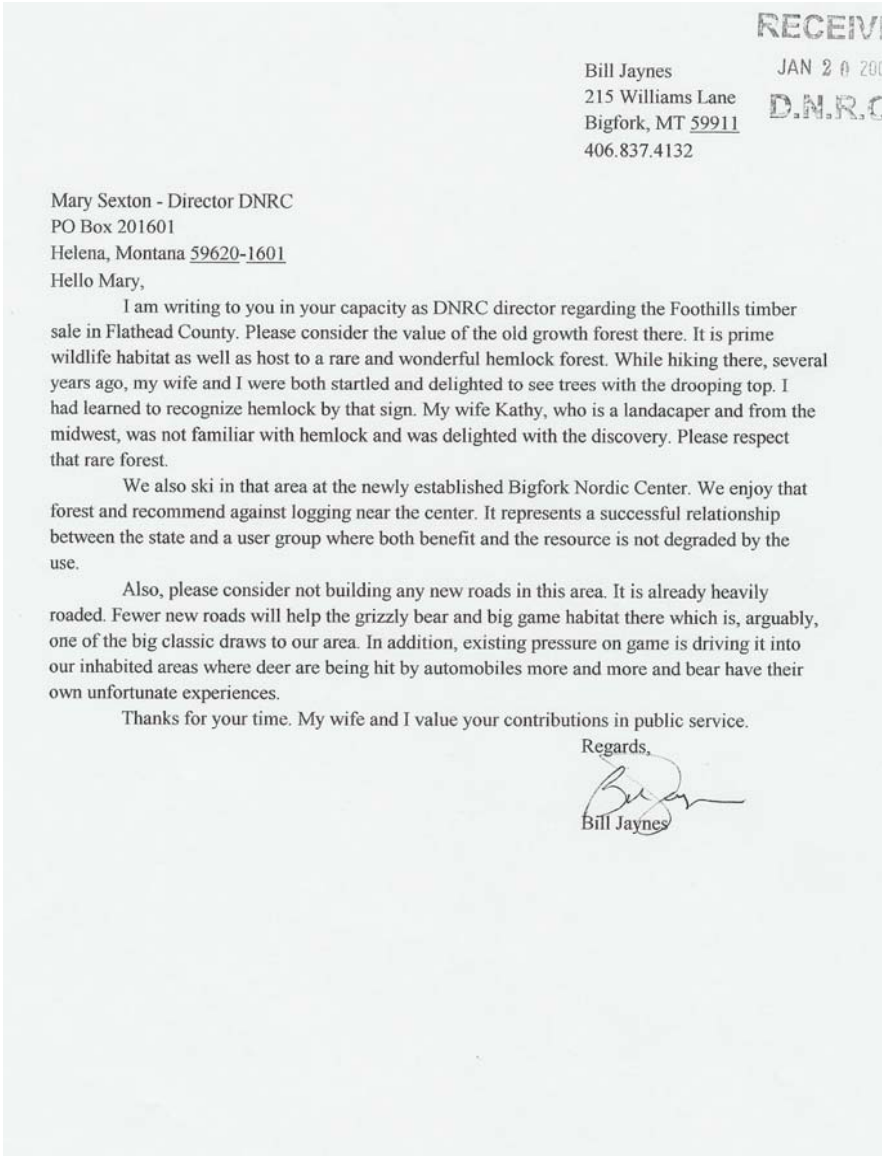
Laura & Brett Holmquist
Co-Founders, Co-Directors
Ravenwood Natural Science Center

Brett Holmquist
Co-Director, Co-Founder
Ravenwood Natural Science Center
PO Box 2084
Bigfork, MT 59911
406 837 7279
brett@ravenwoodnsc.org
http://www.RavenwoodNSC.org

DNRC Response

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter



RECEIV
JAN 2 0 20
D.N.R.C

Bill Jaynes
215 Williams Lane
Bigfork, MT 59911
406.837.4132

Mary Sexton - Director DNRC
PO Box 201601
Helena, Montana 59620-1601

Hello Mary,

I am writing to you in your capacity as DNRC director regarding the Foothills timber sale in Flathead County. Please consider the value of the old growth forest there. It is prime wildlife habitat as well as host to a rare and wonderful hemlock forest. While hiking there, several years ago, my wife and I were both startled and delighted to see trees with the drooping top. I had learned to recognize hemlock by that sign. My wife Kathy, who is a landacaper and from the midwest, was not familiar with hemlock and was delighted with the discovery. Please respect that rare forest.

We also ski in that area at the newly established Bigfork Nordic Center. We enjoy that forest and recommend against logging near the center. It represents a successful relationship between the state and a user group where both benefit and the resource is not degraded by the use.

Also, please consider not building any new roads in this area. It is already heavily roaded. Fewer new roads will help the grizzly bear and big game habitat there which is, arguably, one of the big classic draws to our area. In addition, existing pressure on game is driving it into our inhabited areas where deer are being hit by automobiles more and more and bear have their own unfortunate experiences.

Thanks for your time. My wife and I value your contributions in public service.

Regards,

Bill Jaynes

DNRC Response

Old Growth - One 22-acre stand is classified as old growth in the project area. Neither action alternative would enter this stand (section 4.1.2 on pages 79-80 of the DEIS).

Logging in Hemlock - As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response

REBECCA L. JOHNS

Rebecca L. Johns
Carl D. Ambrose
1319 Holt Drive
Bigfork, Montana 59911
(406) 837-2029 phone
rjohns@aboutmontana.net

January 25, 2006

Dear DNRC,

We are writing in regard to the Foothills Timber Sale DEIS. We would like this letter to be included in the official comment record for this sale.

We are local citizens who have benefited greatly from the Bigfork Community Nordic Center and donated to the development and maintenance of the groomed ski trails provided by the group.

We are aware of issues with residents using 4x4 vehicles on the trails after they have been meticulously groomed for our use. This problem has not been resolved. We therefore support the wishes of the BCNC group requesting a more detailed transportation plan for the area. We would also like to see signs informing the public that off road use is illegal in this area.

We also support the wishes of the BCNC group to collaborate with DNRC to work through the timber sale. We feel that Nordic skiing in our area is a much needed opportunity and is compatible with the timber sale.

Sincerely,

Rebecca L John
Carl Ambrose

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your input will be considered in the decision-making process. DNRC appreciates the Bigfork Nordic Center's desire to collaborate on the use of this area for skiing and timber management.

Comment Letter

01/15/2006

Pete Seigmund-DNRC Forester
2250 Highway 93 North
Kalispell, MT 59901

Re: DNRC Proposed Foothills Timber Sale

Dear Pete,

This correspondence concerns important issues regarding the above noted issue. As a long time recreational user of this area, I consider it a critical area that needs due diligence due it its inherent value and proximity to urban areas. Please consider the following issues in your determination:

1. Avoid logging near Broken Let Trail # 544 and the Bigfork Community Nordic Center.
2. Do not build additional roads, as the area is sufficiently roaded. Although some roads will be decommissioned, the history of enforcement is extremely poor.
3. Use extreme care in the ever increasingly rare hemlock areas.

I thank you for you kind consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Randy Kenyon and Donna Harrison
PO Box 3312
Kalispell, MT 59903

DNRC Response

Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center - The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.

Logging in Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Comment Letter

From: Rachel Cooper [rachskee@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2006 11:31 AM
To: Schweitzer, Brian; Johnson, Brad; McCulloch, Linda; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Morrison, John; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter
to governor brian schweitzer, brad johnson, linda mcculloch, micheal mcgrath, john morrison, mary sexton, and pete seigmund,

this is a letter in regards to the public lands that are currently up for sale by DNRC. I urge you all to seriously consider keeping these precious lands in the Swan Foothills public. These are lands that provide opportunity for non-motorized recreation and include prime grizzly bear and big game habitat that is already threatened with roads. Build no new roads, temporary or otherwise. Due to past logginghemlock forest had become increasingly rare in this area, please no logging any hemlock. Do not log in the vicinity of the Bigfork community Nordic Center ski trails near Jewel Basin and Foothills Road. Do not log within sight of Broken Leg Trail #544 at the foot of Mt. Aneas. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rachel Klempel
Bigfork, MT

DNRC Response

DNRC is not proposing to sell these lands as part of the Foothills Timber Sale project.
Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.
New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.
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Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response

RECEIVE
JAN 18 20
D.N.R.C

To: Mary Sexton – Director DNRC
Cc: Pete Seigmund – DNRC Forester
Fr: Brett Kulina
Re: Foothills Timber Sale – Flathead Valley

January 16, 2006

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in response to the Foothills Timber DEIS that was recently made available by the DNRC. I own 30 acres of land adjacent to State lands in the NW4 of Section 28, Township 28 North, Range 19 West and after careful consideration of the material in the DEIS, I have to support the "no action alternative" described in section 2.3.1.

My main concern is the condition of the land AFTER the proposed logging occurs. I spend a lot of time hunting and recreating on these State lands and can attest that the areas that have been most recently logged are in the worse shape, especially in regards to fire danger, weed infestation, misuse and abuse by the public, and apparent health of the ecosystem.

Currently the areas that are most prone to fire are the areas that appear to have been logged in the past 20 years. The soil is dryer in these areas, the slash more plentiful, and the increased availability to motorized traffic all contribute to ideal fire conditions. On the other hand, if you travel into the areas that have yet to be logged, especially the Hemlock stands, the soil is moist and the air is cool even in the heat of summer. Certainly there are many downed trees and dead standing trees in these dense stands, which could provide fuel for a large fire, but the overall conditions are not conducive to a fire starting because there is adequate tree canopy, no slash, moist soils, and less motorized traffic. During the intense heat of August, one can plainly feel the difference between the areas that have been previously logged and those that have not been logged. The logged areas are bone dry, covered in slash, sit in direct sunlight, and usually have litter within sight because motorized vehicles use the "closed" skid roads for access. One feels that a simple spark would set the place ablaze, yet if you walk under the canopy of the non-logged areas, the air is almost cold and the ground is covered by mosses and soils that only thrive in wet conditions. In seems unlikely that you could even try to start a fire in these areas.

Other areas of concern that have directly affected my property are weed infestation, vandalism, and misuse of State lands. These negative impacts only occur in areas that have been opened up by past logging projects. I spend thousands of dollars fighting knap weep, hawkweed, and mullen on my property and the weeds all come from the adjacent State land that was previously logged. I also replace cut fences and damaged gates that separate my land from state land, and the vandals all come from old logging roads that were apparently closed by the installation of a small ditch or hump.

This fire risk issue was addressed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7.3.3 on page 13) of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS). As described on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives. As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.
DNRC shares the concern of noxious weeds in the project area. As described in section 4.1.7 on page 84 of the DEIS, application of integrated weed management techniques would address the occurrences and spread of noxious weeds. DNRC would collect a forest improvement fee in addition to the stumpage dollars we receive for the timber that is harvested. This forest improvement money would be used to spray weeds, conduct road maintenance operations, plant trees, treat slash, and other follow-up treatments. In absence of the timber sale, we would not collect forest improvement money to do these types of projects.

Comment Letter

I understand the need for the DNRC to produce revenue for the state by this type of logging project, but one must consider the plentiful revenue that comes to the state from property taxes paid by people that want to live near these amazing recreational opportunities. If you study the increased property values in Bigfork, near Foothills Road and Jewell Basin you would find that they stem from the close access to some of the best recreational lands in the state, lands that are owned by Montana and provide great access to USFS lands. Indirectly these State lands have already generated money for Montana through increased property taxes! I would like to make the case that more revenue will ultimately be generated for the state by leaving these last remaining Hemlock and Grand Fir stands and the prime recreational areas, such as the Community Nordic Center and other trail systems, untouched rather than to try to get a one-time sale for pulp material (especially because the pulp market is pretty lousy right now.)

I certainly agree that there are certain State lands that should produce revenue through resource extraction and some even by outright sale for development, but the lands included in the proposed Foothills Timber Sale are not them! In fact these areas should be protected for the amazing recreational benefit that they offer to all Montanans and for their unique locations between private lands and USFS areas.

Sincerely,

Brett Kulina
PO Box 411
Lakeside, MT 59922

P.S. – I was surprised to see that a timber conservation license on 1.2 acres was included in the DEIS, because when I inquired about a similar situation I was told by DNRC that I would have to purchase the entire timber allotment area, which was several hundred acres, and therefore unfeasible. If I had not been directly told that I could not purchase a timber conservation license for a small amount of acreage, I certainly would have.

DNRC Response

Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social and/or wildlife benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing "support" for the state's schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116). The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land. Consequently, while there may be value to the community for the retention of open space on state trust lands, as trust managers, we are legally bound to manage the lands unless the trusts are compensated for their retention as open space lands.

Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.

Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
	In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail. In May of 2005, the Foothills project newsletter opened a 60-day period for parties to file a notice of intent for a conservation license in lieu of timber sale. There was no indication that purchase of the entire sale would be required for a license.

Comment Letter

From: Tom Marx [tom066@centurytel.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 26, 2006 9:19 PM
To: Schweitzer, Brian
Cc: Johnson, Brad; imcculloch@mt.gov; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); jmorrisin@mt.gov; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter; planningweb@co.flathead.mt.us
Subject: Foothills Timber Sale DEIS
Tom & Donna Marx
401 Sylvan Drive
Kalispell Mt 59901

January 26, 2006

Honorable Governor Brian Schweitzer
Mr. Brad Johnson
Ms. Linda McCulloch
Mr. Michael McGrath
Mr. John Morrison
Ms.Mary Sexton
Mr. Pete Seigmund
Flathead County Planning Office

We are concerned about actions proposed by DNRC in the Foothills Timber Sale DEIS

We oppose any logging of hemlock forest.
We oppose any building of new roads, even temporary.
We oppose logging anywhere near Bigfork Community Nordic Center ski trails around Jewel Basin and Foothills Road.
We oppose logging within sight of Broken Leg Trail #544 at the base of MT Aeneas.

Our family has put a conservation easement on 160 acres of land on the North Fork of the Flathead at Trail Creek. We respectfully ask you, to do your part to protect Montana.

Sincerely

Tom & Donna Marx

DNRC Response

Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.
New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.
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Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

Comment Letter

December 22, 2005

Pete Seigmund
DNRC Kalispell Unit
2250 Hwy 93 North
Kalispell, MT59901

RE: Foothills Timbersale DEIS Comments

Dear Pete,

Please accept the following comments on the DEIS for the Foothills Timbersale. I am in strong support of alternative B. As you are well aware, many of the stands in the management areas have been hit very hard by the fir engraver beetle, resulting in exceedingly high mortality in the grand fir. While the silvicultural prescriptions you have proposed may seem heavy handed to some, the stand conditions and insect activity have left very few options.

From my experience in working in very similar stand types with fir engraver beetle outbreaks, retention of even the thriftiest grand fir is ineffective. Invariably, upon re-inspection of treated stands the year following treatment, even those thrifty grand fir are infested with the engraver beetle. The result is either a re-entry salvage harvest or more likely, no salvage and loss of value to the trust. Therefore, I strongly caution against leaving too many grand fir in stands that exhibit engraver activity. We can hope that the wetter summer conditions will slow the progression of the beetle activity, but have yet to see strong evidence of this!

It is unfortunate that it has taken so long to implement this project. I would assume that the majority of the grand fir that has already been killed is of little if any economic value. What will be the contract requirements with regard to removal of pulp? Many of the proposed stands will most likely have excess pulp quality trees over and above what will be necessary to meet large woody debris needs. However, from a silvicultural perspective, it is necessary to remove many of these trees from the site to meet regeneration and slash reduction objectives.

DNRC Response

We agree that the majority of the Grand fir is in extremely poor health. Field observations during tree marking and cruising noted numerous signs of recent fir engraver attacks on seemingly healthy, young trees. The majority of grand fir would be scheduled for removal with the selection of an action alternative. This project would retain some grand fir within harvest units as mitigation for other resource concerns such as wildlife.

At this stage in the project, the contract has not been completed. We understand the volatility of the pulp market and any requirement of pulp removal is unlikely. There is however a need to remove some of the cull overstory in order to meet regeneration objectives. This requirement would be defined in the timber sale contract. On past projects, the sale administrator has worked with purchasers to implement the prescriptions efficiently.

Comment Letter

It may be necessary to consider subsidizing the removal of pulp from some of the stands in order to meet other objectives. We have found in management of our own lands that it is often more cost effective to bear a financial loss on the removal of pulp from a site in conjunction with the logging than to have to deal with the pulp in either the slash reduction or regeneration stage with other equipment. I believe that there are other examples of this being done on other sales on the Stillwater State Forest.

Stoltze holds a right of way easement across School Trust Lands in Sec 11 T27N R19W. I could not find any maps showing proposed road construction / maintenance / obliteration in the DEIS. I assume that our use of this road will continue to be unimpeded by your management activities.

The issue of weeds is covered in the DEIS, we strongly support continued and expanded weed treatment in the project area. This will continue to be an ongoing problem in this area and sufficient annual budget must be earmarked for this area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. We would like to see this project implemented as soon as possible to prevent further value loss in the grand fir stands. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul R. McKenzie C.F.
Forester

DNRC Response

There are no plans to alter the current road located in sec. 11 for which Stoltze Land and Lumber has an easement.

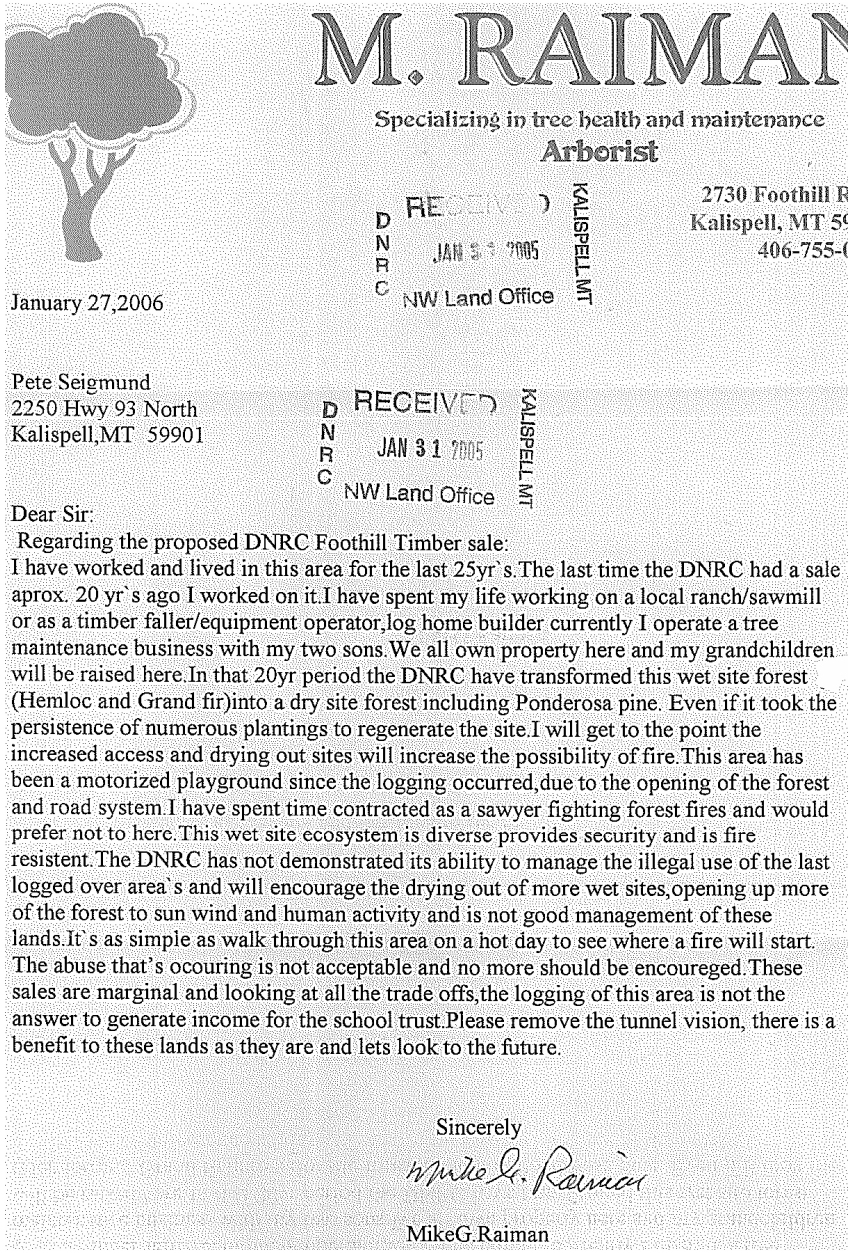
DNRC shares the concern of noxious weeds in the project area. As described in section 4.1.7 on page 84 of the DEIS, application of integrated weed management techniques would address the occurrences and spread of noxious weeds. DNRC would collect a forest improvement fee in addition to the stumpage dollars we receive for the timber that is harvested. This forest improvement money would be used to spray weeds, conduct road maintenance operations, plant trees, treat slash, and other follow-up treatments.

Thank you for your input. Your comments will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
From: tompat [porker@montanasky.net] **Sent:** Saturday, January 28, 2006 10:53 AM **To:** Seigmund, Peter **Subject:** Timber Sale Mr.Seigmund: I am in full support of the timber sale in the jewel basin area.As an avid skier it would be beneficial to the Bigfork community and the surrounding area.It could also be an area for summer recreation. Tom Nadeau	Thank you for your input. Your comments will be considered in the decision-making process.
From: neilnavratil@netscape.net **Sent:** Friday, January 27, 2006 4:55 PM **To:** Seigmund, Peter **Subject:** foothills timber sale To whom it may concern: 1/27/06 This letter is to respond about the foothills timber sale. As a member of the Big fork Nordic Steering Committee as well as a user of the foothills area for skiing, I would like to express my support for the timber sale. I feel the logging of this area would only improve the area by opening up the canopy to allow snow the fall on the trail, improve the existing road bed and possibly add new trail to the system. I think it is a win, win situation for all of us. Thank you for considering our comments. Neil and Debra Navratil Great Northern Foods P.O. Box 45 Bigfork, MT. 59911	Thank you for your input. Your comments will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

DNRC Response



M. RAIMAN

Specializing in tree health and maintenance

Arborist

2730 Foothill R
Kalispell, MT 5
406-755-

RECEIVED
JAN 31 2005
NW Land Office
DNRC
KALISPELL MT

January 27,2006

Pete Seigmund
2250 Hwy 93 North
Kalispell,MT 59901

RECEIVED
JAN 31 2005
NW Land Office
DNRC
KALISPELL MT

Dear Sir:
Regarding the proposed DNRC Foothill Timber sale:
I have worked and lived in this area for the last 25yr`s.The last time the DNRC had a sale aprox. 20 yr`s ago I worked on it.I have spent my life working on a local ranch/sawmill or as a timber faller/equipment operator,log home builder currently I operate a tree maintenance business with my two sons.We all own property here and my grandchildren will be raised here.In that 20yr period the DNRC have transformed this wet site forest (Hemloc and Grand fir)into a dry site forest including Ponderosa pine. Even if it took the persistence of numerous plantings to regenerate the site.I will get to the point the increased access and drying out sites will increase the possibility of fire.This area has been a motorized playground since the logging occurred,due to the opening of the forest and road system.I have spent time contracted as a sawyer fighting forest fires and would prefer not to herc.This wet site ecosystem is diverse provides security and is fire resistent.The DNRC has not demonstrated its ability to manage the illegal use of the last logged over area`s and will encourage the drying out of more wet sites,opening up more of the forest to sun wind and human activity and is not good management of these lands.It`s as simple as walk through this area on a hot day to see where a fire will start. The abuse that's ocouring is not acceptable and no more should be encoureged.These sales are marginal and looking at all the trade offs,the logging of this area is not the answer to generate income for the school trust.Please remove the tunnel vision, there is a benefit to these lands as they are and lets look to the future.

Sincerely

Mike G. Raiman

MikeG.Raiman

Wet site to dry site and increased fire danger - This issue was eliminated from further study in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS).

While the State Forest Land Management Plan states that, "In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be our primary source of revenue and our primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives…" (DEIS, page 8), timber harvesting is not an exclusive activity on trust lands.

Comment Letter

From: Steve Raiman [sraiman@centurytel.net]
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2006 11:27 AM
To: Seigmund, Peter
Cc: Sexton, Mary; Morrison, John; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); McCulloch, Linda; Johnson, Brad; Schweitzer, Brian
Subject: Foothills Timber Sale

1/30/2006

Dear Forest Management Supervisor Pete Seigmund,
also: Director of the DNRC Mary Sexton, Governor Brian Schweitzer, Secretary of State Brad Johnson, Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch, Attorney General Mike McGrath, State Auditor John Morrison,

I want to take a moment to comment on the proposed Foothills Timber Sale on the DNRC land in Flathead county. This sale will have many detrimental effects on the quality of life for the residents of the Mountain Brook community. I have attached the letter I wrote last year to DNRC's Beverly O'Brien outlining some of my specific concerns.

I just want to reiterate that I believe the costs associated with this sale cannot be measured in simple dollars and cents. For example the DEIS clearly shows that the proposed sale will: Be detrimental to wildlife and their security (including several threatened and endangered species), Cause the spread of noxious weeds necessitating increased applications of the poisons used to control them, Will cause increased illegal motorized use which will continue to cost money to try to restrain, Will dry many of the sites out (coupled with the spread of weeds and illegal motorized use this will greatly increasing the fire danger in the urban-wildland interface), And will cause short term quality of life issues for the local residents from the dust, smoke and noise generated by this management strategy.

What is not mentioned in the DEIS is how this timber sale will effect the local property values at a time when the valley is booming. This sale will cause many thousands of dollars of lost revenue for any one trying to sell their real estate while it is going on, and for many years thereafter. Right now, the Foothill Road area is one of the most desirable places to live in the Flathead valley, with consistently strong and growing real estate values. The biggest reason for this is the proximity to the quiet recreation and peaceful backdrop which the State land provides to this area. Also not accounted for is the effect that

DNRC Response

The impact of the harvest of State Trust Land Timber on adjacent land values is varied and depends on the values of the adjacent land owner, the condition of the timber on the state trust parcel that is harvested and the harvest treatment that is specified for the parcel. Often the adjacent owner or purchaser would prefer to see the forests unmanaged. In this case, State management of the forest will reduce the value of adjacent land. However, for other individuals who like a more open forest type, a thinning of the forest might provide an open park-like setting that allows easier viewing of wildlife and other forest characteristics will enhance the value of the adjacent lands. In still other situations where the State forest land is diseased and dying, even an even aged management scheme will be preferable to looking at a dying forest or the remnants of a decadent forest. It is impossible to generalize about the value of the logging treatments on state forest trust lands and the impact on adjacent land owners. Since the lands must be managed to provide support for the state's schools as indicated above, the states primary concern must be the support of public schools. The forests in the foothills area are in need of management if they are to fulfill their purpose of supporting state school trusts. There is a substantial amount of fungal disease, beetle infestation, and poorly stocked stands in this area. Not managing these trees means that the trust will not only lose money now but that future generation will lose money because the forest regeneration was delayed because we chose to defer management today. This means that DNRC would be in violation of the laws under which it is required to follow to manage state lands.

Comment Letter	DNRC Response
1500+ log truck loads of hauling will have on the twisty, narrow and increasingly trafficked Foothill road, especially from a financial standpoint as this road will not handle that type traffic without some significant expenditures for maintenance.	The Foothill County road is maintained by Flathead County.
I realize that there are many compelling reasons for proposing this timber sale. While I do not believe that the benefits long term will come close to equaling the detrimental effects on this community, I fear that political motivations will see some kind of logging done in this area, even if it is just for old-times-sake. So I urge you to try to find a way to preserve the recreational opportunities provided by the Bigfork Community Nordic center ski trail system and the heavily used Broken Leg trail (#544) into Jewel Basin Hiking area by not logging within sight of these areas. This will do much to mitigate the impacts of this sale on quiet recreation in the area. The threat of forest fire is a huge concern of local residents and clear cutting any significant amount of the proposed acreage will dramatically increase the risk of fire so I ask you to consider developing a new option that does not call for clear cutting. Also, to mitigate the impacts of this sale on this prime grizzly bear and other sensitive wildlife habitat I urge you to find an option that does not call for new road building, temporary or otherwise. This will have the added benefit of cutting down on illegal/unauthorized motorized use which will reduce fire danger, reduce the spread of noxious weeds, require less enforcement and help maintain the future peace and quiet of the neighborhood.	Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social and/or wildlife benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing “support” for the state’s schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116). The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land. Consequently, while there may be value to the community for the retention of open space on state trust lands, as trust managers, we are legally bound to manage the lands unless the trusts are compensated for their retention as open space lands. This fire risk issue was addressed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7.3.3 on page 13) of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS). As described on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives.
State land in Montana is a treasure whose value cannot be measure by it's production of timber alone. The short term profits from "managing" these lands as a timber base will not even come close to the value they will have 25 years from now as focal points for our communities providing the open space, a sense of peace and many opportunities for quiet recreation. All it takes is to look around the country to see what it takes to make one urban area rated as more livable than another. Invariably it comes down to the access to undeveloped land for quiet use. I urge you to consider the direction this valley is headed. It will be an urban center, not a back-water town. We will need all of the undeveloped land that we have in the valley bottom to maintain the quality of life that people are increasingly moving here for. Thank you for your consideration, Steve Raiman sraiman@centurytel.net 406-257-5664	

Comment Letter

From: Robert Raiman [rraiman@bigsky.net]
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2006 4:12 PM
To: govenor@mt.gov
Cc: Johnson, Brad; lmcculoch@mt.gov; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Morrison, John; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter
Subject: Flathead valley/ Foothills Timber Sale
To whom it may concern:

I am long time resident of the foothill road area currently proposed for a large timber sale. I am opposed to this timber sale. I was at early meetings that were held to get public opinion. We actually walked the proposed sites, and talked about the impact. At that time it was clear to me that this timber sale should not go through. I feel the following points summaries the negative aspects of this sale.

1) Loss of last Western Hemlock stand east of the Cascades.
2) Opening of an area that has had habitual abuse from off road vehicles.
3) Loss of critical interface for endangered species, grizzly bears specifically use this area.
4) Liability for potential fire danger increase from logging a wet site area and drying it out.
5) There is no financial appeal to this sale.

I could go on and on about how critical an area this is to me, my family, and my community. I can only hope that you will hear the people that live in this area and do not want this timber sale. There is no benefit from this timber sale to the residents of the state of Montana.

Sincerely,

Robert Raiman

DNRC Response

1. Stands with western hemlock occur at many locations east of the Cascades, and are more abundant in northern Idaho and far northwestern Montana than in the Foothills area. As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.
2 and 3. As described in the DEIS, both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6 Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads. DNRC has no personnel for enforcement of road closures and cooperates with Forest Service and Fish Wildlife & Parks enforcement personnel. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives.
4. This fire risk issue was addressed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7.3.3 on page 13) of the DEIS. DNRC would treat all logging slash in accordance with the State Fire Hazard Reduction Law. Removal of overstory trees would likely increase soil moisture due to decreased transpiration rates (refer to water yield sections 3.2 and 4.2 of the DEIS). As described on page 114 of the DEIS, the extent and amount of illegal motorized use is expected to decrease under both action alternatives.
5. As described in section 4.9 of the DIES on pages 116 through 120, there are direct and indirect economic benefits of the proposed timber sale.
Thank you for your input. Your comments will be considered in the decision-making process.

Comment Letter

From: Linda Regnier [lregnier@centurytel.net]
Sent: Friday, January 20, 2006 4:30 PM
To: Schweitzer, Brian; Johnson, Brad; McCulloch, Linda; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Morrison, John; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter
Subject: Swan Foothills DNRC Lands
Dear Governor and DNRC Members,

We live very close to the lands which you are proposing for logging. We were in the midst of one of the rare hemlock forests in this area last week-end, cross country skiing, and appreciating all that this forest has to offer to us.

We ask that you please consider the following in making your decision regarding this logging: please release any hemlock forests from your logging plan, build no new roads, do not log near our new nordic center, Jewel Basin or Foothills Road or within sight of Broken Leg Trail #544.

Perhaps many of you have explored this area -- If not, please come. You may wish to leave it as it is if you could see it in its winter beauty.

Sincerely, Linda and Jim Regnier, 197 Lakeshore Dr., Lakeside, 59922

DNRC Response

Western Hemlock Stands – As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.
New Roads – As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.
Logging Near Bigfork Nordic Center **-** The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds an annual special land-use license for a network of cross-country ski trails in the area. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of the Nordic Ski license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As stated on page 114 of the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Prior to issuing the special land-use license, DNRC informed Bigfork Nordic Ski Center officers of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale. These individuals expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations as well as our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.
Logging near trails – As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

Comment Letter

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DNRC RECEIVED JAN 11 2006 NW Land Office

January 10, 2006

Pete Seigmund
Forest Management Supervisor
DNRC Kalispell Unit
2250 Hwy 93 N.
Kalispell, MT. 59901

Re: Foothills Timber Sale Project Comments.

After reviewing the DEIS, I offer the following comments on the project as they relate to fisheries. The mitigation measures prescribed for units adjacent to fish bearing streams include applicable Forestry BMP's, the SMZ Law and Rules, and Forest Management Administrative Rules for fisheries riparian zones. Proposed harvest within each stream's fisheries riparian management zone varies by stream.

As outlined in the DEIS, there appear to be four streams with proposed riparian harvest under alternatives B or C: Krause Creek, Birch Creek, Wolf Creek and the Swan River. Past riparian harvest on state land has occurred on all of these streams except Wolf Creek. Past riparian harvest on other ownerships has also occurred within most of these watersheds and the DEIS' fisheries analysis acknowledges that this may be impacting large woody debris recruitment, shading, and riparian function. On the Swan River, riparian function has been severely altered in the area due to private ownership and development. Sediment inputs from erosion associated with the timber harvest as well as stream channel instability could also adversely affect fisheries habitat within these streams. Negative impacts to fish bearing streams tributary to the Swan River will also have some impact to fish recruitment to the Swan River.

Because of the potential to further impact fisheries habitat in these streams through the Foothills Timber Sale, I recommend a modification of mitigation measures (2.3.3) for Fisheries Habitat- Riparian Function. On all fish bearing streams (Krause, Birch, Wolf Creeks and Swan River) use the delineated riparian management zones as boundaries to exclude harvest. Doing this will maximize large woody debris recruitment and improve riparian function and habitat quality, as well as provide added wildlife values. On the Swan River, a wider riparian harvest exclusion zone is warranted due to the 100 year floodplain delineation and potential for channel migration. On the river I recommend that timber harvest be excluded from the 100 year floodplain plus the riparian management zone width (93 feet).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Sincerely,
Scott Rumsey

DNRC Response

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. In response to your comments and suggestions DNRC has modified the fisheries mitigation measures that would be applied to Krause Creek, Birch Creek, and Wolf Creek under Alternatives B and C. The full SMZ width (50 feet from the bankfull edge of the stream channel) would be a no-cut buffer along these three fish-bearing streams. This is an increase from the original 25-foot no-cut buffer described on page 18 of the DEIS. A maximum of 50 percent of trees greater than 8 inches in diameter at breast height would potentially still be harvested between 50 feet and the outer edge of the site-specific riparian management zones. The foreseeable impacts to fisheries variables as a result of these modifications to fisheries mitigations measures are expected to be the same as those described in the DEIS on pages 91 through 97.

In those locations within the proposed harvest unit adjacent to the Swan River (Unit SR1), the 50-foot no-cut buffer and riparian management zone generally do not intersect the FEMA-defined 100-year floodplain. The beginning of the 50-foot no cut buffer begins at the slope break typically forming the edge of the lowest alluvial terraces. According to the team hydrologist the lowest alluvial terraces forming the banks of the Swan River generally delineate the potential extent of the 100-year floodplain as defined by FEMA. Therefore timber harvest within proposed Unit SR1 is not laid out to occur below the slope break of the alluvial terraces, or within the FEMA-defined 100-year floodplain. As a result of this harvest design the outer boundary of the 50-foot no-cut buffer is actually greater than 50 feet from the bankfull edge of the Swan River. DNRC has decided to not modify the fisheries mitigation measures that would be applied to the Swan River. The foreseeable impacts to fisheries variables as a result of not modifying these fisheries mitigations measures are expected to be the same as those described in the DEIS on pages 91 through 97.

Comment Letter

From: Franklin E Schroeter [fschroeter@centurytel.net]
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2006 2:40 PM
To: Schweitzer, Brian; Johnson, Brad; McCulloch, Linda; McGrath, Mike (DOJ); Morrison, John; Sexton, Mary; Seigmund, Peter
Subject: Foothills Timber Sale
State Land Board Members, Ms Sexton, Mr Seigmund:

I am an enthusiastic supporter of No Action Alternative A
But since the stars are aligned for Alternative B, so be it.

Philosophy/ Economics/ Aesthetics

You state that the Alt B School Trust income ($1, 235, 730) [who believes seven significant figures in an exercise such as this?] would be enough to fund the education of 175 students for one year. Of course your figure is a best case scenario and does not include the costs associated with losing for the next century or so the aesthetic and some recreational values of an unlogged forest. $1.2 million also is a mere 1.5% or so of the funds that the legislature managed to appropriate for education in the recent special session. $1.2 million also is about what President Bush and his fellow war criminals are managing to flush down the Iraq latrine every nine minutes. Bottom line: I realize that the State is mandated by the ?Constitution? to make its lands profitable. I suggest getting rid of this mandate (as obsolete as the 1872 mining law) and getting all educational funding from traditional sources such as state and local taxes and federal grants.

Specific Requests/Recommendations

1. Try not to log within sight of Trail # 544 near the bottom of Mt Aeneas

2. Try to stay away from the new cross country ski area near Jewel Basin

3. See if you can't find a way to do this project using existing roads and not building new ones. (to save what little grizzly habitat is left)

4. Spare the hemlocks. (they have already been heavily logged in past projects in the vicinity)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Yours very truly,
Franklin E Schroeter 255 Boon Rd Somers, MT 59932

DNRC Response

As stated on page 116 of the DEIS, the revenue calculations are estimates and not intended for interpretation as absolute values. Often individuals who purchase land near state school trust lands have the expectation that the state school trust lands are like US Forest service lands that can be managed for broad social benefits. State school trust lands were established for the specific purpose of providing "support" for the state's schools. This support has generally been interpreted to mean the generation of revenue for the individual school trusts. Thus, State Trust Lands must be managed for revenue to support Montana schools. This requirement has been confirmed by the courts and by the Montana Legislature in law (MCA 77-5-116). The law further stipulates that management of State forests cannot be deferred without the trusts being compensated for the market value of the resource whose management is deferred. This includes management as open space land, conservation lands or any other purpose that would remove the land from management without compensation.

1. As described in the DEIS on page 114, the proposed harvest Unit #BC 2 would impact approximately 1200 feet of trail #544 by logging on both the uphill and downhill sides of the trail. In response to this concern, DNRC has moved the harvest unit boundary to below the trail so that the trail is not impacted by harvest activities. Logging would still be visible from the trail and hikers may choose not to use the trail.

2. The Bigfork Nordic Ski Center currently holds a special land-use license for cross-country ski trails. As described on page 114 of the DEIS, there may be a short-term disruption of that license. However, this project would likely improve the quality of the trails and roads the Nordic Center uses by improving roads and increasing snow depths on the trails. As also stated in the DEIS, improved parking for non-motorized use could also be a potential benefit. Individuals associated with the Bigfork Nordic Ski Center expressed support for the upcoming timber sale and recognized DNRC's fiduciary obligations and our attempt to accommodate multiple-uses on the same piece of land.

3. As stated in the DEIS on page 19, Action Alternative B would construct approximately 1 mile of new road and 1.8 miles of temporary roads. Action Alternative C would construct about 1 mile of temporary road. Temporary roads would be reclaimed after the completion of harvest and forest improvement activities. The DNRC is closing the maximum amount of roads possible. Both action alternatives would decrease open road densities from the existing condition and improve wildlife security (see 4.5.6, Grizzly Bear on pg. 107 and road density calculations in the errata). The no-action alternative would not close any additional roads.

4. As described in section 4.1.3 (DEIS, p. 80), each action alternatives would include treating only 150 acres of the total 500-acre mixed conifer type in the project area. Western hemlock is most prevalent in the 350 acres that would not be treated. Harvest prescriptions in the 150 acres being treated would favor the retention of western hemlock and focus on removing grand fir. This project would not effect distribution of western hemlock stands.